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Editorial
from the renegade files of Scotto

I need to be very clear about this, because unsubstantiated rumors are already swirling around on the World Wide Inter-Web, and my henchmen can only stop so many of these rumors with their usual clever mix of intimidation tactics and large payouts of gray market "secret sauce." So here is the truth, once and for all: yes, I was offered the position of Director of the Office of Homeland Security.

You may remember in the hours immediately following the awful attacks of September 11, 2001, that the President was incommunicado for a while, as he flew from one military base to another. Well, it's time for the truth to come out: President Bush actually flew to my secret bunker underneath the mountains just outside of Cedar Falls, Iowa, where my personal sushi chef and my small army of Filipino slave girls attended to our every need. In those hours, it was I who first suggested to President Bush that he might well need to rethink the problem from a completely new vantage point. My first suggestion – pave the entire Earth and move the human race to the space ark that the aliens have hidden behind the dark side of the moon – did not go over well with the damn "Earth first!" members of Bush's Cabinet, who still seem to believe the deal JFK struck with the aliens won't hold up in an interdimensional court of law. The fact remains: JFK's signature on that document means we're going for a long, permanent ride on that space ark eventually no matter what; he sold out the Earth's oxygen supply in exchange for his own little one-way trip to the Dimension of Hexagonal Lust, his robot double got wacked to cover his absence, and the aliens are due to collect in 2012. The real question is: why don't we just pave the Earth first, spend a few years driving around *really, really fast,* and then blow this popsicle stand? I don't think the Bush administration is up for asking hard questions like this.

So that's when I suggested creating the Office of Homeland Security. Apparently *some* people still think "law enforcement" and "intelligence" are reasonable ways to keep all the damn crazies and assholes out of this great land of our nation. Well, *forget it*, people. My idea at the time was building an enormous electrified barb wire fence that goes around the entire country. What the United States also needs is a very, very large sign, probably suspended from orbit somehow, that says "THIS COUNTRY PROTECTED BY ACME HOME SECURITY SYSTEMS!" These signs work like a charm for keeping burglars out of rich people's houses, and will undoubtedly also keep crazies and assholes out of this great land of ours, especially if the sign is in the shape of a police badge.

This world is bad enough already, without you trying to

shut all the smart people up.

I guess the idea of an Office of National Security kind of stuck with President Bush, because once he got back to DC, he started calling me and bugging me to actually run the damn thing. The problem is, I can't stand his press secretary, Ari Fleischer. You may remember the whole scandal with Bill Maher, host of *Politically Incorrect*, getting scolded by Ari Fleischer for having an unpopular opinion and then having the audacity to express it. Fleischer stated: "It's a terrible thing to say, and it's unfortunate. There are reminders to all Americans that they need to watch what they say, watch what they do, and this is not a time for remarks like that; there never is."

Oh *really*.

With all due respect, Ari "Would Someone *Please* Get This Broom Handle Out Of My Ass?" Fleischer, we the American people will continue irritating the shit out of you for the rest of our natural lives, what with our wacky "ideas" and our zany "freedom of speech," long after you and the entire American government is finally replaced by the alien leaders who will supervise our exit to the space ark with their Electric Human Prods of Shameful Delight. You can keep fighting your war on drugs and your war on terrorism, but don't you fucking *dare* tell us what to think or when to say what we think. Despite every recommendation I've made to every secretly convened Congressional panel I've faced over the last 142 years of my unnatural, "secret sauce" preserved life, this great land of ours remains a democracy, not a totalitarian regime where you, Ari "*Please,* It Hurts So Much Up There!" Fleischer, get to wear a funny mustache and march around in shiny boots ordering your minions to do the yard work and take out the trash and, oh, when you get around to it, round up all the dissidents and have them shot out by the garage. This world is bad enough already, without you trying to shut all the smart people up.

This issue marks a departure for us here at *Trip*. Typically we don't get too topical, due to our somewhat erratic publishing schedule, but the events of September 11, 2001, were too momentous for us to avoid. Instead, we've invited members of the psychedelic community at large to offer their opinions on the situation. We feel that at a time like this, the opinions of our own severely marginalized community may not have much direct impact on the world, but we must nevertheless make the effort to contribute to the dialogue, on whatever level we can. Most of these submissions were penned in the immediate wake of the attacks, and are presented as a snapshot of what our contributors felt at the time. Our thoughts go out to all those around the world who have been affected by these events and their ongoing aftermath. — ***Scotto, Editor in Chief***

About the cover:
This issue's cover is an original digital artwork, *Spangle,* by **pfly** of Seattle.

About the last issue's cover:
Ooops. We mistakenly printed that the cover of *Trip* #6 was an original digital artwork by Morpheus of Seattle. Turns out the image wasn't digital at all, and Morpheus is actually from Knoxville, TN. Sorry about that!

About the guts:
This issue of *Trip* was printed with soy-based inks on 50# recycled white opaque book stock. All pages were laid out in Adobe InDesign. Original artwork was created, scanned and/or digitized using Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Macromedia Freehand, or some combination of those listed. The *Trip* pre-press operating system of choice is Macintosh, of course.

Letters to the Editor

WHITE LIGHT QUESTIONED...

Just a trivial comment on the 5-MeO piece ("Exotic Substance Review: 5-MeO-DMT," *Trip #6*). The author refers to "venom of various Bufo toads" plural as being a potential source for 5-MeO-DMT. So far as I am aware there has been only one lonely toad species out of the many dozens analyzed that has been reported to contain 5-MeO in ANY amount (including traces). I certainly won't dismiss the possibility that trace amounts of 5-MeO might have been missed somewhere or that an unexamined toad might even turn out to be a decent 5-MeO producer some day. It just does not seem to be available information right now. Nor will I ignore that it's also true that there is the more remote possibility that the effects of bufoviridine (the sulfate ester of bufotenine) MIGHT possibly RESEMBLE the effects of 5-MeO when burned. However bufoviridine is 1) always accompanied by many other compounds and 2) can't properly be called a 5-MeO source as it is just as likely to degrade and produce bufotenine and sulfur dioxide. It also apparently lacks any known human evaluation either in pure form or as toad venoms containing appreciable amounts of it but without far higher levels of bufotenine or 5-MeO-DMT. Just curious if the author knows something about toads that I don't or if this was simply vague or careless wording.

I also wonder if the author isn't possibly missing something with the 5-MeO. Sometime ago a friend pointed out that the white light state the author likes so much is what results when one fails to break through that first level barrier of the 5-MeO experience and becomes diffused into the white light state. If one can focus and remain intact just long enough to break through that white light barrier a whole other dimension of experience can be accessed with 5-MeO. I've found it even richer in content and greater in potential range when able to break through that "deeply felt" scattering layer of white light but to each their own. I sure don't dismiss the value of what they experienced as it does seem to be quite an important aspect of the 5-MeO realms. I would never claim that what works for me or what I value is necessarily going to be perceived or valued the same by another mind. It's just a thought that you might want to suggest as it might open up another potential vista of 5-MeO, as it did for me (assuming we are not simply using differing semantics here). 5-MeO is certainly among my all time favorite flavors of altered vantage points despite my rather low frequency of use in the last several years. "So many drugs; so little time," is how someone put it.

Do you know of anyone who has tried 5-MeO-MMT? Its a long shot but I figured I'd ask. All I can locate is an intriguing rodent evaluation reporting jumping movements and rapid drumming with forelimbs accompanied by a rhythmic nodding of the head. Not certain indications by any means, of course, but certainly piquing my curiosity a touch.

Good luck with the zine,

K. Trout

First, it was indeed a careless wording that led us to suggest more than one species of toad produces 5-MeO. Our crew of fact-checking slaves has been soundly beaten about the head and shoulders for their mistake, although to be fair, we often beat them about the head and shoulders just for the sheer fun of it, too. As for the white light phenomenon, this aspect of the experience is apparently so distinctive for so many people that we've even seen T-shirts with the slogan "white light, white heat" and a nice big "5-MeO-DMT" to hammer the point home. It really is hard to say which words are even appropriate from one person to the next to describe what may or may not be similar states, but thanks for the extra vantage point. And finally, we've never even heard of 5-MeO-MMT, which is either indicative of our general ignorance, or our lack of insider cool, we're not sure which. Readers?

...AND 2C-T-7 DEFENDED

I was very much taken aback by the article "2C-T-7 Commentary" in the Fall 2001 issue of *Trip*.

At first, I was amazed that someone could die from taking this very wonderful, benign substance. On reading further, I was even more amazed to discover what little respect some people give to these sacred substances, and even more, how little prepared they are to make proper use of them.

The responsibility for this latter state must surely rest largely in the hands of the Federal government, which has a much more powerful interest in incarceration than in harm reduction, despite the oft reported claim that the war on drugs is to protect our youth. There also exists a powerful bias which can only be the result of politics or ignorance (if there is a difference), which has prevented any scientific research in these most valuable and useful substances. (There are very powerful reasons why the majority of scientists, government officials, and the general public do not perceive these values, but I won't deal with them here.) Despite psychedelic substances being made illegal to possess, many have recognized their great value and find it a betrayal to humanity not to provide help to those who can benefit. However, they cannot publicly share the useful information they continue to gather for fear of incarceration.

I think considerably more work has been done with 2C-T-7 than has been recognized, certainly enough to establish that it is a useful, fruitful, and harmless substance when properly used. Besides the investigations conducted by Ann and Sasha Shulgin, four of which are reported in their book *PIHKAL: A Chemical Love Story*, I and my wife Jean explored 2C-T-7 with a number of volunteers. Our first three trials of this substance are reported in my book, *Thanatos to Eros: Thirty-five Years of Psychedelic Exploration*, along with some general comments. We found very little difference between 2C-T-2 and 2C-T-7, both having very similar dose ranges, time to reach full effect, a broad, approximately 5 hour plateau of full activity, and gradual descent. The major difference is that some found 2C-T-7 more euphoric. It is our experience that as one learns to use these substances effectively, and therefore gains more volition over the process, the differences between compounds as close as T2 and T7 tend to fade.

With my partner Jean, I have done an extensive amount of investigation of 2C-T-2 and 2C-T-7, as I am sure is the case with the Shulgins. We know of not a single instance of anyone getting into any kind of post-session difficulty with these substances. Of course, uncomfortable moments are encountered during the experience, as this is the natural course of resolving repressed painful material. I am personally not aware of any such discomforts continuing post-session. We of course followed informed guidelines for working

with psychedelics, some of which are listed at the end of this letter. In a published paper, "Preliminary Results with New Psychoactive Agents 2C-T-2 and 2C-T-7" (http://www.erowid.org/chemicals/mdma/articles/texts/1993_stolaroff_1.pdf), the first time use of each of these chemicals is compared to the first time ingestion of MDMA. Our total experience with these two compounds is a good deal more than reported in this paper. Again, it is difficult to see that these two compounds could cause harm if following informed guidelines.

I would like to point out that practically *all* psychedelics are potentially dangerous. Along with countless others, I have found them powerful learning tools applicable to many areas. But for fruitful results, it's important to know what you're doing. One of the main things psychedelic drugs do is open the door to the unconscious mind, and all this entails. Since much of what is in our unconscious is pushed there because we don't want to know it, it is very risky to employ these substances without knowing that our Shadow Side may appear. To guarantee a fruitful experience, one must commit to the decision to accept and resolve unconscious material that is encountered. This alone can be a most worthwhile accomplishment, freeing us from hidden drives that control our feelings and behavior without our knowing it, as well as releasing the energy used to repress our Shadow. Resolving shadow material raises our energy level, permits clearer awareness, frees intuition and creativity, promotes well being, and gives greater access to our true inner self.

Next, most of the phenethylamine substances are relatively benign. *However,* the ratio of the level producing undesirable effects to the active dose level is quite low compared to compounds like LSD. For example, look at MDMA. MDMA is an unusually enjoyable, fruitful substance for most at the level of 120-160mg. Uncomfortable side effects can arise as you move above this level. Hardier users may take 300 to 350mg, far beyond what I would recommend. In our research with MDMA, involving around 100 participants over a period of ten years, we found that an initial dose of 120mg was appropriate for a large majority of participants. Since the activity of MDMA began to subside around 1½ hours after ingestion, an additional supplement was most often provided in the amount of one third the initial amount or 40mg at the 1½ hour point to extend the action.

Often when the effects of the supplement began to diminish, some subjects requested an additional supplement. We quickly found that for most persons, the second supplement of 40mg was not fruitful. There was not sufficient benefit to overcome the uncomfortable feelings and uneasiness resulting from further dosing.

So imagine my amazement to find that often at raves, as users felt themselves coming down, they would take another full dose, and later on in the same evening, even another! These are indeed hardy souls, for they have loaded themselves up to a very toxic level, a level that for me would create considerable discomfort – at least a temporary loss of most of the beneficial effects and restless unease. It would take several days with plenty of exercise to free my body from such ill effects.

I realize that various individuals have different responses and reasons for imbibing and I support their right to make their own choices. Of course we each have to live with our choices. It is easy to see that in our current society, heavily invested in material gain and often with both parents working, many grow up in uncomfortable circumstances. Just a few hours of escape are treasured. But these substances have for us an enormous potential. For those who would like to maximize their effectiveness, I would like to make some suggestions:

1. Know what you are taking. For example, in the deaths related in the *Trip* article, how do you know it was actually or completely 2C-T-7?
2. Know why you are ingesting. What would you like to achieve? Everything is possible from problem solving, self-knowledge and development, to the ultimate secrets of the universe. But if the last is your goal, be fully prepared to accept whatever your inner psyche has lying in wait. Remember, it is connected to Ultimate Wisdom, and knows far better than you in your surface head what you must do (or not do!).
3. Learn from reliable sources the nature of the experience and helpful guidelines.
4. It is important, especially in early trials, to have a knowledgeable person present.
5. Avoid *greed*! Achieving your full potential is a naturally flowing process, combining learning with application in life. All you are looking for, the realized masters tell us, you already know and have. The process is mostly a dropping of the barriers you have created in various ways to hold away Glory. Trying can be what the Buddhists call *grasping* – pushing too hard overrides the sometimes sensitive and delicate nuances that are extremely important, and creates tension and resistance. In the psychedelic world, grasping is often in the form of large doses – in the three cases reported in *Trip*, fatal. At my current stage in life, where I feel a goodly number of important things have fallen into place, it makes little sense, for example, to snort one of these wonderful compounds for a few hours of exaltation, when spending time with the full effects of an excellent compound like 2C-T-7 can bring enough understanding and fulfillment to more fully enjoy life on a continuing basis. Enlightenment is not won by Storming Heaven (thank you, Jay Stevens), but more by being perfectly still, letting go, asking good questions, carefully observing, and gratefully putting into practice what is learned. The Buddhists claim, and I do not doubt them, that enlightenment can only be achieved by committing oneself to the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings. In the end, Love is the only worthwhile answer.

I hope some of these comments shed some light on how these marvelous psychedelic substances that are available to us can bring remarkable joy and fulfillment into our lives.

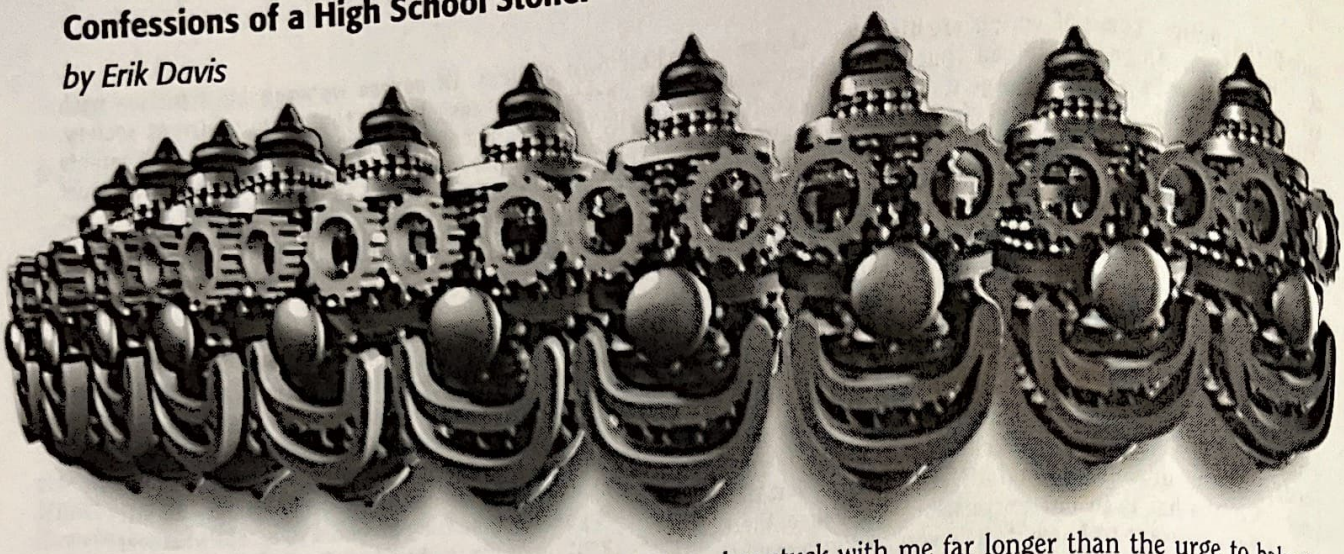
Sincerely yours,

Myron Stolaroff

Teenage Head

Confessions of a High School Stoner

by Erik Davis



I became a teenager the year Reagan ran for president, and by the time the lizard slid into office, I was already a total stoner. I bonged skunk bud, chased JD with Coke, snorted Beauties, and had dropped my first dose of acid the previous Halloween, tripping to *Ummagumma* amidst the paisley bed sheets and pillows that lined the loft my friend Bry-Fry knocked together in his family's garage. Phasing between the reveries of a bookish childhood and the hormone-fueled angst of teendom, my mind liquefied, running through the cracks and creases of a suddenly unfolded world.

Today it shocks me somewhat to imagine such a far younger version of me battering his brains with recreational chemicals. But drugs are like sexual pleasures: Experimentation is a prerequisite for judgment. For each of us, certain drugs will become allies, enemies, passing acquaintances — but somewhere along the way, they must be encountered, knee-deep in the mud of personal history.

Though the timing of my early encounters now seems a bit out-of-hand, the place was certainly more than appropriate: coastal California. Not that my neck of the palms was a ganja paradise. Before I entered junior high, my family moved inland from Del Mar, the mellow, upwardly mobile surf town north of San Diego name-dropped in the Beach Boys' "Surfing, U.S.A.," to Rancho Santa Fe, a wealthy and conservative realm of citrus groves, migrant Mexican workers, and geriatrics in golf carts. Stone-cold Reagan country, and me and Senzo Joe would escape into the weed, toking up in so many lemon groves that the sharp tang of citrus peels still conjures up bud.

Pot led me into a tangible world of bubbling micro-perceptions, haunted winds, and hilarious malformations of the data-stream. But pot also gave me something that has stuck with me far longer than the urge to bake the brain: a love of slippage, founded in the realization that altering perception alters the claims reality makes on you. The various social agendas of parents, teachers, and the ghost of God could be sidestepped not only by sullen monosyllables and the worship of unwholesome heavy metal guitarists but by tinkering with consciousness itself. What greater rebellion than rewiring one's experience of the world?

Parents have reason for concern. At 13, identity is a spell woven from a bursting body, ego defenses and worldviews have yet to congeal, and the prepubescent power of fantasy lurks just below the surface. That's why kids can travel so far into their headphones, role-playing games, pop star posters, and beat-up copies of *The Necronomicon*. Toss in a psychedelic — and let no one tell you that good weed cannot be a psychedelic — and the warp gets deep. Pot lets you see dragons in the clouds again.

I know, because I saw a lot of stuff, zoning out in that bedroom whose entire surface area was covered with some numinous image: goat-gods, space ships, mandalas, *Penthouse* pin-ups, Jesus, Jimmy Page. In that psychic house of cards, I jerry-rigged my mind, teaching myself to soar off a single hit of scraped resin, the reek cloaked by blackberry incense on my hodge-podge altar crowned by a cement Buddha. He was a birthday gift from Senzo Joe, ripped off from someone's lawn, and once I swear he slyly peeled back his ponderous eyelids and stared me down.

The ominous intensity of that gaze, conjured with so little fuel, could be evidence of the dangers mind-altering drugs pose for kids. But it's difficult for big folk to make judgments about teens without projecting their own foibles and fears onto creatures who live in a completely different world — a zone that is far more complicated than a simple

Illustration by Sheldon Drake

stage "between" childhood and that elusive (and highly debatable) state called maturity. The things that make teens teens — their pliable subjectivities, imaginative resourcefulness, rebellious courage, cliquishness, and cultural verve — give them powerful tools and contexts for experiencing drugs, tools that most adults lack. It's no accident that many kids start taking drugs at about the same age when children in traditional societies are tossed into a terrifying rite of passage, often involving some freaked-out combination of blood, darkness, self-sufficiency, and secrets. For better or worse, acid, 'shrooms, and massive bongloads now perform this rite, leaving marks that are both scars and the deep patterns of change.

Unfortunately, dog-eared copies of Castaneda or a snide older sibling is the closest many kids come to having a guide for this phase shift between innocence and experience. That's where subculture steps in, collective identities which can shore up the threat of dissolution and excess. The public high school I attended — imagine an open-air Ridgemont High surrounded by sagebrush and rocky arroyos, with seagulls diving for your lunch meat — was a mosaic of pot-smoking cliques, their turf demarcated as succinctly as the multicolored regions in maps of the cerebral cortex: skateboarders, metalheads, punks, death-rockers, stoners, and the various flavors of surfer — the long-haired Zep fans, the cue balls that dug ska, and the dread-headed ones we called Waspafarians.

Too tripped out to surf, my friends and I set ourselves somewhat apart. Our campus turf was beyond the smoking section, behind a wall, in the Gel Circle — from the verb "to gel," synonymous with "veg" and "mold," all denoting the same state of blazing slack. I suppose we were perceived as druggies rather than simply stoners, but now I'd call us heads. (Since I was issued into the world the same month as *Sgt. Pepper's*, my notion of "head" is a reading, not a recollection. For me, heads directed their radicalism toward consciousness rather than society or the defense of nature. Seizing the means of perception with techniques rather than truths, the archetypal head was neither a daisy-lover nor a bomb-thrower, but something in between, wired into cavernous headphones, devouring SF paperbacks, pop physics, yogic manuals, anarchist cookbooks, all while smoking tons of pot and maintaining an account at the campus mainframe.)

It was this exploratory interiority, coupled with an ironic and parasitic relationship to the suburban carnival of SoCal drug culture, that defined my closest group of friends for the first few years of high school. Talking weird science, meditating, reading Hunter Thompson, Moebius, and *Be Here Now*, listening to Eno, Floyd, Zappa, and, yes, Yes (with the Talking Heads our one concession to new wave), we played the hippies the punks played at killing. Yet we mixed with death-rock chicks and skinheads more than surfers, almost as if the extremity of our anachronism was our shock tactic.

And so much of it had to do with drugs: Thai-stick, black hash, Humboldt sense so juicy that even doubled-up in sandwich baggies, shoved into greasy blue jeans, it'd reek up Trig. There was usually speedy blotter to be had, but a beneficent wind might bring Orange Sunshine, purple microdot, four-way windowpane. As with computers or political organization, the specific rituals this candy produced were quite self-reflexive: scrounging and pooling of petty resources, hunting down the candyman, catching rides through the tract-home maze, scoring, seeking the hidden zones, foraging for implements. We were immersed in an educational system whose ultimate goal is filling in little round circles with No. 2 pencils, and drugs actually offered a crooked avenue to resourceful, independent problem-solving, from knocking on some housewife's door at 10 p.m. to ask for a sheet of aluminum foil to learning how to make a pipe from an apple, how to use weights and scales, how to research pharmacology at the university library, how to grow plants.

And, most fun of all, pot taught us the guerilla art of concealment, of disappearing into the fractal curves in the landscape: pockets of sagebrush, sandstone, and pine that have since been almost entirely obliterated by the tumorous development endemic to Southern California. Secret forts became stoner zones: Mars, Red Rocks, the Hobbit Hole, the Mushroom Tree. Like some pied piper of Pan, marijuana leads kids to places gone to seed-vacant lots, stream beds, canyons, underpasses, boundary zones where landscape becomes imaginative clay, suddenly collectivized in the ritual trinity of substance, vessel, and flame. Most drugs are "natural" in their origin, even if the worlds they conjure are not. But the cosmos pot opens up is distinctly organic (hence vegging out). You can hear it in pothead hip hop as much as the obvious hippy folk, a fuzzy echo as if some crunchy lichen has run riot over the mix. Weed can restore something of nature's flow in the midst of the urban milieu, teaching you how to slip through the cracks in the concrete, or how to find wilderness in the most degraded or rigidly stratified of circumstances. Marijuana's logo is not a spoon or a needle or a bottle. It's a leaf.

We drank loads too, almost as much for the sport of keg crashing as for the sloshy slapstick philosophizing it produced. And weed itself often devolved into a kind of beer. But psychedelics were always our Grand Guignol of phantasmic ecstasy. LSD turns the mind into a kind of silly putty, lifting images from a comic-book world and then twisting them alternately into hilarious caricatures or resonant archetypes. Kids can dig this, and certainly can ride with it better than most adults, who find the world unstable enough as it is. Because most of us were still cushioned in our parents' homes, my friends and I

had a baseline security that allowed us to enter LSD's ontological house of mirrors with the proper plasticity. Like running hell-bent down the slippery rocks of a steep river bank, tripping makes for a certain balance in flux, an internal momentum easier for kids to achieve than their more brittle future selves.

We knew from Leary and Alpert the importance of set and setting, advice we both followed and blatantly ignored. Outdoor Dead shows were a cross between the bardos of the Tibetan afterlife and romper rooms, but North County's unspoiled zones were the greatest backdrops. The summer we were gobbling all of Squiggles's white blotter, we'd time our doses to hit at sunset. We'd kick back on the coppery cliffs of Red Rocks beneath a hunchbacked pine and watch the sun melt into the immense, resplendent sea. The sky struck the total chord of the spectrum, from the reddish lump of the slipping orb through the violet haze of the canopy above. And to the east lay the distinct boundary where dusk stopped and evening began to sketch the uncertain hieroglyphs of the stars.

I realized I didn't want to do drugs as much as think drugs.

And then we'd plunge, in that aimless and reckless quest for the silliest of grails (a party, pot, a parent-free abode), arms open to the banal, tinny surface of suburban culture. Perhaps I became an apocalyptic postmodern one of those nights, when I entered a 7-11 with the knee-shaking awe of a UFO abductee. But I certainly learned to listen for the cosmic giggle in the babble of popular culture the night Weffles and I, toasted on some nameless blotter, visited Tuddy's downbeat seaside motel.

The place smelled like a cave, the carpet was stained with sticky grime, and Tuddy, an outpatient from a mental ward and one of the good-natured party animals we called aardvarks, was blotto, a half-empty case of Henry's or Mickey's or some other lousy lager on the formica table. We murmured weird communications, attempting to track the myriad and ridiculous paths other aardvarks had taken that night. Like the eye of a djinn, a 13-inch black-and-white TV stared down at us from the corner of the ceiling. It was showing *Animal Crackers*. With a glance, Groucho took measure of our squalid scene, raised an eyebrow, and split the world apart with a wisecrack of gutter satori, as if someone had fished a smelly copy of *Mad* from a dumpster and folded it into a delicate origami swan that instantly took to wing, singing the elusive song of the psychedelic ineffable: "Hello, I must be going..."

It doesn't really matter what Groucho said. Acid doesn't give you truths; it builds machines that push the envelope of perception. Whatever revelations came to me then have dissolved like skywriting. All I really know is that those few years saddled me with a faith in the redemptive potential of the imagination which, however flat, stale, and unprofitable the world seems to me now, I cannot for the life of me shake.

Years ago, the weed and I pretty much parted ways. Some folks claim that pot chills them out, but in my brain it produces a bubbling, crackling connection-machine which usually sinks into the mire. Trivial objects, words, and glances stitch together webs of deep and intense meaning that uncomfortably thicken — once a Greek salad in New Haven set off a rumination on the flows of Western history which overwhelmed my puny mind like a tidal wave. Pot makes a lot of people uncomfortably paranoid, in part because it produces enough connections to elicit the subterranean patterns of the conspiracy theorist, while not rewiring the self a la five grams of Stropharia cubensis. Whether or not the sense that everything fits together is perceived as a holistic liberation or a dire trap depends a lot on how tightly you are clutching to your frame of mind. Curiously, though, I have found that the more processed the cannabis the better — extracts, oils, hash and tobacco mixes are all preferable to the increasingly gnarly bud grown by California's green thumbs.

For all their gifts, drugs create many problematic relations: to their own absence, to habit, to money, to the dealer, to the down. They did nothing for my teen angst or my memory, and for others were less forgiving. High school friends of great wit, intelligence, and spirit are now junkies, alkies, hopeless flakes, burn-outs, and, in more than one instance, a corpse. They were no more taken by drugs back then than I was. Today, I rave it up now and then, keep periodic appointments with the gibbering, serpentine, science-fiction All-Being who resides in the

hyper-dimensions of psychedelic space, and drink to moderation. I did not reject drugs; I simply let them be, making sure to leave the door ajar for whatever intriguing research substances remain unchecked on my curriculum vitae.

But I take great satisfaction in the fact that many people acquainted with either my writing or my person assume I'm a total stoner. For when I began to pull away from consistent drug use, I realized that I didn't want to do drugs as much as to think drugs, to simulate their hyper-connections, magical causality, and semiotic drift as much as possible within my own mind. The French post-structuralists (and Castaneda fans) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, whose works produce the immanent patterning of psychedelic cognition, write that drugs can be understood at the level where "desire directly invests perception... and the imperceptible is perceived"-a liberatory goal indeed. But Deleuze and Guattari are fairly down on drugs themselves. To quote them quoting Henry Miller, the point is to get drunk on a glass of water.

Which is to say that sobriety alone does not have the tools to build sense and meaning from these vertiginous, virtual, data-dense end-times. Level-headed thinking is no option when the ship is pitched to and fro — you either resist and puke, or ride with the galloping serenity of the mounted nomad. Perhaps Walter Benjamin was right: civilization is perpetual crisis, and my point of view is only an indication of that irreparable deviation my reason took over a decade ago. But for those of us who get stoned off dusk, who tweak the knobs of consciousness, who turn our minds into heads, the question is moot. Like that giddy flash of anxiety that hits the moment the blotter melts on your tongue, it's too late now. Here it comes.

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REALWORLD

ONE SPIRIT, MANY VOICES

BODY AND SOUL
Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Party

Sufi mysticism speaks a message of enlightenment and love, often through poetry and music. Spreading through India from Persia in the 12th century, wandering dervishes of the Chisti order would turn up in a village to play rousing airs on drum and flute whilst spinning tales and legends. Music and song were used to induce ecstatic states during devotional rituals — thus was born the astonishing vocal tradition we know today as *qawwali.*

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, the most brilliantly gifted *qawwal* of our time, made this recording in his native Pakistan shortly before his death. Retrieved from a family archive and mixed at Real World Studios, it is a radiant gift, a document of pure poetical beauty.

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Temple of Sound & Rizwan-Muazzam Qawwali
PEOPLES COLONY No. 1

Rising stars of *qawwali*, the nephews of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan team up with Trans-Global Underground alumni Neil Sparkes and Count Dubulah in this riveting, majestic fusion of traditional, sinuous vocals and a shimmering, rhythmic wall of sound.

"There Is Only One Valid Approach..."

The Forgotten History of Drugs, Science and Self-Experimentation

by Mike Jay

When did people start using mind-altering drugs to explore consciousness scientifically? Many people would immediately associate this program with the Sixties, but in fact Tim Leary and his cohorts represented not the beginning of a new adventure but the end of a long-established tradition. Science and the drug experience may have little to say to each other today, but they have an intimate shared history which sheds a great deal of new light on both parties.

This is a brief summary of that shared history, viewed not through the lens of modern counterculture but of old-fashioned natural science. From this perspective, the understanding of mind-altering drugs — the ones I'll be focusing on here include nitrous oxide, cannabis, cocaine and mescaline — represents a specific and time-honored challenge for the scientific method. Most medicinal drugs can be satisfactorily assessed by tests on tissue samples, animals or patients seeking relief for a specific condition, but drugs which produce an altered state of consciousness are different: the presence or absence of their effects can perhaps be inferred from standard physical observations and procedures, but these effects can only be described in detail by the experimental subject. So the dilemma which they pose is this: can the effects of mind-altering drugs really be understood on the basis of external observation alone? One view — the familiar one — is that any subjective account of their effects is inadmissible within the framework of positivist science, at best meaningless and at worst delusional or pathological. The other view — and the one with a far longer history — is that, without the scientist's own experience of the state of consciousness which they produce, any conclusion about their effects is compromised — maybe even fatally so.

In short, is this type of self-experimentation "unscientific" — or is it the only way to know whereof you speak? It's the former view, obviously, which prevails within the mainstream of science today — to the extent that even informal self-experimentation runs the risk of dismissal or even exclusion from the profession. But this hasn't always been the case. Let's consider some of the highlights of the century or more where self-experimentation with drugs was a legitimate, if not unquestioned, part of the scientific method.

The birth of the modern program can be quite precisely located in 1799 — on the 17th April, in fact — with Humphry Davy's nitrous oxide experiments at the Pneumatic Institution in Bristol. This project, in which Davy was accompanied on his psychonautic adventures by the likes of Coleridge and Robert Southey, focused explicitly and for the first time on self-experimentation, and foregrounded the emphatic claim that making sense of the subjective effects of nitrous oxide was the most crucial part of the project. The next whistle-stop is the French psychiatrist Moreau de Tours' work with hashish in the 1840s, which marks the beginning of self-experimentation in psychiatry, and which produces an even stronger claim for self-experimentation than Davy's: that "there is essentially only one valid approach... observation, when not focused on the observer himself, touches only on appearances and can lead to grossly fallacious conclusions."

Essentially the claim in both these cases comes directly out of the core of the Enlightenment: a natural science which is seeking mechanistic explanations for states of mind. So how and when did this search become marginalized within the sciences? Much of the scanty and often superficial literature on the subject recycles the received view that Freud's now-infamous "cocaine episode" in the mid-1880s marked the end of self-experimentation as a respectable praxis, his conclusions seen as a blunder resulting from injudicious self-experimentation, a failure of methodology through which Freud fell short of the standards of his profession. But as we shall see in our third whistle-stop, this wasn't how Freud's work was received at the time, and indeed many respectable doctors and scientists continued to self-experiment during the decades after Freud — though most of them with a more canny eye on the public presentation of their work.

If the dilemma — to self-experiment or not to self-experiment — were now entirely resolved, then this would be a question of no more than historical interest. But this

Illustration by TonyB

dilemma still exists, and its continued existence raises important questions of scientific authority. The scientific professions today, from neurochemistry to anaesthesia to psychiatry, are presented through a paradigm whereby the objectively measurable mental and physical effects of these drugs constitute the entire story. Of course these sciences have contributed enormously to our understanding of what these drugs do, but the perceived limiting of science's description of the effects of cocaine or Ecstasy to the measurable changes which they produce in rats' brains is increasingly seen in the broader culture as less than the whole picture. Subjective effects are described in terms of "impairment" or "delusion," and the odd conjunction of scientific description and moral judgment which persists in standard clinical terms like drug "abuse" or "misuse" gives the impression that the scientific understanding of these drugs is constructed entirely of negatives. While it's clearly the job of science to elucidate such negatives, the cumulative effect of science's dire warnings about these drugs is akin to describing the effects of penicillin by reading the list of side-effects in the MIMMS catalogue while neglecting to mention that it's also an antibiotic.

"Experience and observation would be our only guides..."

As a result, the broader public understanding of these drugs — which is, as we know, considerable — is largely constructed outside science: science is associated with anti-drugs propaganda, and the pronouncements of publicly funded organizations like the National Institute of Drug Abuse, whose name suggests that they're arguing from their conclusions, tend to be received in the broader culture with skepticism or indeed ridicule. In a world where these drugs represent an increasingly large cultural influence, not to mention a significant public health problem and a huge criminal business, it's striking that their public understanding owes so little to science, and it seems important to establish when and how the subjective account of the effects of these drugs fell outside the remit of science, and how much of what fell out might have been bathwater and how much baby.

It's also interesting to consider the effect of science's exclusion of drugs on the way in which the counterculture has framed its own psychedelic experience. It's probably no coincidence that the strains of Eastern mysticism which form the ruling paradigm for so many trippers only really began to colonize the landscape once science had vacated it. It's no surprise that the impulse to build metaphysical systems around psychedelics began as soon as the Western intelligentsia began to take them — but what's striking is that, until the Sixties, these systems were far more often constructed within scientific and Western forms: psychiatry, cognitive science, aesthetics. We may quite rightly disdain science's exclusion of altered states from its own paradigm, but has this disdain had more effect on our own paradigm than we acknowledge?

But let's begin at the beginning, with the 21-year-old provincial chemist Humphry Davy — on his way to greatness as inventor of the Davy lamp, President of the Royal Society and figurehead of Victorian science — being summoned to Bristol by the radical doctor Thomas Beddoes to supervise his project of "pneumatic medicine," treating the "sick and drooping poor" with inhalations of recently-isolated gases like oxygen and nitrous oxide. Davy was actually engaged as a technical supervisor responsible for medical safety but, once the mind-altering effects of heroic doses of nitrous oxide became apparent, his focus moved to investigating the effect of chemical and material causes on the higher functions of the human mind. In the mainstream Enlightenment paradigm, thought and imagination were the "sublime" regions held by Descartes to be the seat of the soul and as such not directly subject to material cause and effect; but there had already been steely challenges to this limiting of science's scope. Precursors to Davy's investigation can be found among the ultra-Cartesians of the French Enlightenment like Julien de La Mettrie, who in books like *Natural History of the Soul* and *L'Homme Machine*, written in the 1740s, made the case that all mental states, in man as in animals, can be investigated physiologically. (*L'Homme Machine* was de Sade's favourite book; two centuries later, R.D. Laing would call it "the most evil book ever written.")

La Mettrie attacked the Cartesian pieties about the soul head-on. Higher functions like imagination were, for him, also the result of physiological activity, and he supported this view with his own experience of fever-induced delirium where — from a physical cause — the power of the imagination is heightened and "the soul is so eclipsed it gives no sign of itself." In the future, he claimed, "experience and observation would be our only guides" in these matters — adding the professional qualification that "it is only the physicians who have the right to speak here." It is in this tradition, and under the Enlightenment motto of "sapere aude" (dare to know), that we can understand Davy, having already inhaled sufficient nitrous oxide the day before to establish its safe use in clinical practice, on 17th April 1799 deliberately inhaling a much larger quantity for the specific purpose of observing its effects on his mind.

It was in one way a simple act, but in another way one which couldn't have been reached without an interaction of three crucial disciplines. It was founded on the "skeptical chemistry" of reaction and isolation techniques, Davy's *entrée* into the project, without which there would have been no gas. Having extracted the raw material he entered into a second discipline, Beddoes' world of medical

applications of gases. This too was a bleeding-edge move: the handful of previous nitrous oxide chemists had simply assumed the gas to be poisonous and never inhaled it. But Davy's direction was set not by medicine but by a third discipline: poetry. The quest for an agent which could organically manifest the sublime represented for him the most noble territory of all: that where science and poetry meet. It's this quest into which Davy introduced his experimental subjects, some of whom were doctors but whose ranks also included poets, philosophers, men of genius. Most of the final section of his book, *Researches Chemical and Philosophical, Chiefly Concerning Nitrous Oxide...*, which includes the subjective descriptions of some 40 volunteers, isn't focused on medical applications. Instead, the subjective reportage concentrates on the search for a "language of feeling." For some of the experimenters, this is literally a search for a new language: as one subject, James Thompson, puts it, "we must either invent new terms to express these new and peculiar sensations, or attach new ideas to old ones, before we can communicate intelligibly with each other on the operation of this extraordinary gas." It's interesting to note that the template of the *Researches* — extraction chemistry followed by subjective commentary — is exactly that used by today's pioneers, such as the Shulgins. Psychedelic science seems to have found its natural literary form at the first attempt.

But — the predictable question — was this a scientific quest? No, clearly, in the narrow sense that it would be unlikely to get funding today. But yes, emphatically, in the sense that it follows the Enlightenment tenet of "sapere aude" into an empirical experiment. So what is the status of the "news from inside" which those under the influence of the gas bring back? Is it science or poetry? Some have made much of the tenuous nature of this coalition, claiming that if the project had persisted, then the union of scientists and poets would have come apart at the seams. Perhaps, and yet Davy was (and remained) a poetically-minded scientist, and someone like Coleridge a scientifically-minded poet. And the project, despite its head-on engagement with the imponderable and sublime, did produce some measured and intelligible reportage. Dr. Roget, for example, of *Thesaurus* fame, writes that "my ideas succeeded each other with extreme rapidity, thoughts rushed like a torrent through my mind, as if their velocity had been suddenly accelerated by the bursting of a barrier which had before retained them in their natural and equable course." This of course prefigures the description by Aldous Huxley in *Doors of Perception*, which has become one of the most enduring metaphors for the effect of psychedelic drugs; and in fact neurochemistry now suggests that it's rather more than a metaphor, and that the literal cause of the sensations Roget describes is indeed a flood of disinhibiting neurotransmitters. Whether science or poetry, the search for a language of feeling was not without its quiet successes.

So Davy's project claims self-experimentation as the crucial tool for locating organic causes of higher feelings, and although this strategy is not unproblematic — its conservative critics saw it as materialist, by extension atheist, even anti-monarchist — there's little suggestion at the time that there's any *a priori* problem with the method itself. Nor is there twenty years later when Thomas De Quincey, in his influential *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, appeals to his own "self-experience" and empirical observation as a more reliable authority than the mealy-mouthed proxy pronouncements of doctors. But the figure who makes the most explicit case for the method is J.J. Moreau de Tours, a French psychiatrist who in the 1840s became the first self-experimenting psychiatrist and author of the groundbreaking *Hashish and Mental Illness*.

It's possible to travel into the realms of delusion, hallucination and insanity while still remaining entirely sane.

Prior to Moreau, hashish had attracted the interest of Orientalists following Baron Silvestre de Sacy's claim in 1808 that the medieval Ismaili sect of the Assassins took their name from hashish, and that it was a drug which was used to brainwash initiates and make them capable of amoral acts of political terrorism. This view was developed by a generation of scholars like Jacob von Hammer-Purgstall who continued to assert that hashish's effects included stupefaction and violent frenzy. It was also frequently asserted in the Orientalist literature that hashish only works on the Arab mind, and that the more delicate nervous organization of the European brain renders it inactive. These views, needless to say, had evolved without any of the participants taking the drug themselves. When Moreau finally tried it — in the traditional massive oral dose of 3 or 4 grams — he was astonished to discover what it actually did, and opens his book with the insistence that self-experimentation is a *sine qua non* of studying such substances. To look at a supine, confused hashish user and to assume that the action of the drug is simply to produce drowsiness or delirium is to miss the point entirely: the reason that people intoxicated by hashish seem to be disconnected from the world is not that less is going on inside their heads than usual but far, far more. He accepts that for a psychiatrist to talk in this manner and to submit himself to the effects of foreign poisons seems superficially odd, but "at the outset I must make this point, the verity of which is unquestionable: personal experience is the criterion of truth here."

Moreau's praxis, like that of the Bristol Circle, combines an empirical objectivity with a broader agenda, in this case that of a secular psychiatry. In his predominantly Catholic world of French psychiatry, many of the profession's presumptions seemed to Moreau to draw as heavily on Christian doctrine as on the emerging science: almost inevitably reason, or sanity, were viewed as God-given, and entirely separate from insanity, which carried strong resonances of the Fall and original sin. Thus insanity was a form of moral weakness, and psychiatrists a species of missionary whose job was to save souls for Reason. But, for Moreau, illnesses like manias were not the symptoms of some hidden physical lesion, but the uncontrolled growth of tendencies which were to be found in the most sane and "normal." Reason and madness were not black and white, but a gray scale. The crucial discovery of self-experimentation from Moreau's perspective was that, however overwhelming and hallucinatory the effects became, the subject never forgot that they had taken a drug, and thus what they were experiencing was being organically assembled within the mind. This provided vindication for his view of the gray scale between sanity and insanity: hashish proved conclusively that it's possible to travel into the realms of delusion, hallucination and insanity while still remaining entirely sane.

His wife had a "cattivo viaggio" – the first coinage of the term "bad trip"

But what were the applications for Moreau's discovery? As a psychiatrist, the task which most clearly awaited him was to demonstrate how hashish might be useful in the treatment of mental illness. He began an informal program of administering hashish to mental patients, with results which were intermittently striking: some insomniac patients were able to sleep soundly after their heroic dose, and other depressives were seized by the profound joyfulness of the effects and found their blackest moods going into remission as a result. But even Moreau himself didn't claim hashish as a panacea, or even a reliable treatment: its effects were too unpredictable, and more often than not short-lived.

However, he had another and far more radical proposal for the use of hashish in the treatment of mental illness, one which focused not on the patients, but on the doctors. Its greatest benefit, he claimed, was in allowing psychiatrists access to the mental worlds they were attempting to understand and treat. "We see only the surfaces of things," he points out. "Can we be certain we are in a condition to understand these sick people when they tell us of their observations?... To understand an ordinary depression, it is necessary to have experienced one; to comprehend the ravings of a madman, it is necessary to have raved oneself, but without having lost the awareness of one's madness." The inescapable conclusion was that it was the doctors, not the patients, who should be taking the drug, in order to recognize first-hand the conditions which they were attempting to treat.

Moreau's work seems to have been well received and he remained a respected figure in French psychiatry for the rest of his long life, but it's not immediately clear where his project of self-experimentation went. I've located three partial answers. First, it takes a similar journey to Davy's search for the sublime into a symposium of artists, poets and men of genius — in this case outside the medical world and into the literary coterie of the Club des Haschischin, where Moreau supplied hashish to the familiar roll-call of Gautier, Dumas, de Nerval, Boissard, Balzac and Baudelaire. Moreau was the prime mover in the Club's styling as a faux-Oriental secret society, for reasons which owed less to flights of decadent fancy than to his own scientific intuitions about set and setting: his lavish Turkish costume and flamboyant master-of-ceremonies role neatly allowed him to oversee proceedings and control dosages without seeming to impose any medical authority on his subjects. As so often in the early history of drugs, it's the *literateurs* who have remained famous but the scientists who really made the scene.

Second, Moreau's work does seem to have inspired some self-experimentation along the lines he suggested, particularly in Italy. Within a year or two, the distinguished doctor Giovanni Polli had published reports of his own experiences on high doses of hashish, and Andrea Verga, director of the Ospitale Maggiore in Milan, had observed Polli's trials and compared them with Moreau's findings. A chemist called Carlo Erba, publishing in Polli's journal, began a methodical investigation of hashish's pharmacology and dosage levels, and another Milanese medic, Filippo Lusanna, reported taking hashish with his wife, who had a "cattivo viaggio" — the first coinage of the term "bad trip."

Thirdly, we can perhaps see some of Moreau's ideas as having been reborn at the end of the century with the emergence of psychoanalysis. Moreau was the first psychiatrist to take an interest in drug effects and psychopharmacology, but Sigmund Freud was to become perhaps the most famous. Freud's work with cocaine is in many ways foreshadowed by Moreau, with his interest not merely in observing physiological effects but in following through into the underlying worlds of abnormal mental states, and in seeing self-experimentation as a legitimate part of this process. And in this context perhaps we can see Freud's radical idea that all psychoanalysts should themselves be analyzed as a manifestation of the same impetus which led Moreau to encourage doctors to experiment on themselves with hashish.

This leads us neatly to Freud — although in fact the mid-nineteenth century self-experimenter who seems most directly to have influenced Freud's work with cocaine was not Moreau but the Italian doctor Paolo Mantegazza, whose dramatic self-experimentation with coca leaf, and subsequent monograph *On the Hygienic and Medical Values of Coca*, also represents the first recorded self-experiment by a European with the drug in question.

The effect of Freud subsequently becoming such a towering figure, and of cocaine subsequently becoming such a thoroughly demonized drug, has set up a kind of historical dissonance which makes his "cocaine episode" almost impossible to judge without hindsight. As a result, the near-consensus is that it was, as Davy's *Researches* have been subsequently read by many, some kind of juvenile aberration, driven by misguided ambition and drug-induced recklessness — an explanation which, with a little stretching, allows people to keep their preconceived views of both Freud and cocaine more or less intact. This consensus unites both Freudians — most significantly Ernest Jones — who in the light of the subsequent image of cocaine have been keen to marginalize its role in the Great Man's career, and anti-Freudians, who have in the same light focused on it as circumstantial evidence for the essentially bogus nature of the later claims of psychoanalysis.

But there's little truth in this received view that Freud's self-experimentation (and ambition) led to recklessness and thus to poor science. At the point at which he began his studies, the accepted view of cocaine was that it was a marginal nostrum of no medical interest: trials like G.F. Dowdeswell's experiments on coca leaf, performed at University College London on his students and published in *The Lancet*, had concluded that the plant was essentially inactive and its centuries of traditional use among the Andean Indians were due to "imagination, association and habit" — in other words, all in the savage mind. By contrast Freud's self-experiments demonstrated that cocaine was a genuine centrally-acting stimulant and as such of potentially huge benefit to a medical profession at that time relatively rich in depressants and narcotics but with nothing to give energy and vigor to weak or depressed patients except mild pick-me-ups like coffee and tea or the ubiquitous but problematic alcohol.

Not only did Freud make an important discovery, but he did so with a methodology which was scrupulously scientific. He related dosage to action carefully, and he made extensive use of dynamometer tests to measure whether feelings of strength were merely subjective or whether they represented a genuine increase in muscular force. These tests, landmarks in the fledgling science of psychopharmacology, demonstrated that the subjective effects were true and objectively measurable — and, by the same token, that the coca-chewing and distance-marching Indians were right and the Western medical consensus wrong.

But the claim which was to prove problematic for Freud — and for self-experimentation in general — as the cocaine episode progressed was that it was not only a central stimulant but a euphoriant. Euphoria was, in Freud's view, one of the central effects of cocaine, and he deliberately stressed this in the style and wording of his paper, *Über Coca*: in the section on "The Effect of Coca on the Healthy Human Body," he states explicitly that cocaine's "exhilaration and lasting euphoria... in no way differs from the normal euphoria of the healthy person" and "is enjoyed without any of the unpleasant aftermaths which accompany exhilaration through alcoholic means." As we know, subsequent advances in the neurochemistry of cocaine have stressed this repeatedly, to the extent that the bulk of cocaine research today consists of attempts to block, interrupt or override the euphoria it produces.

Davy christened nitrous oxide "the pleasure-producing gas"

Freud's stress on cocaine's euphoria also shows him moving towards the radical view of the mind which would soon be his hallmark. Noting that the peak of muscular power corresponded with the peak in mental euphoria, he not only concluded (correctly) that cocaine was both a stimulant and a euphoriant, but that it was in some sense the euphoria which produced the muscular strength, which was "brought about by the creation of an improved over-all state of well-being" — a theory of the interaction of mind and body which was considered heretical in his conservative Vienna but which was simultaneously being established in Paris by Charcot's work on hysteria.

The claim that such drugs were euphoriants wasn't new: Davy had at an early stage christened nitrous oxide "the pleasure-producing gas," and Moreau de Tours had explicitly included "genuine happiness" among the core effects of hashish. But Freud underestimated the effect of his claim on an evolving medical profession that by the 1880s was increasingly stressing its role as chemical custodian of the general public. For the profession to endorse a claim that a drug produces euphoria was increasingly to become an admission of responsibility for the abuse of that drug. Thus, once this claim had been made, their options were either to insist that the drug in question wasn't strictly medical (and cocaine would rapidly become too important for that), or to close ranks against those medical voices who had been tactless enough to stress its pleasurable effects.

Because of the retrospective prominence of Freud's "cocaine episode," it's often assumed that his blunder was the moment at which the medical profession realised *en*

masse what a dangerous substance cocaine was; but this was far from the case. The discovery of the dangers of cocaine in the treatment of morphine addiction by doctors like Albrecht Erlenmeyer, who christened cocaine "the third scourge of humanity" after alcohol and opium, represented the first sharp swing away from the idea, itself only a year or two old, that cocaine was a valuable panacea — which in turn, as we've seen, represented a sharp swing away from the previous idea that coca was essentially inactive. The next pendulum swing came promptly the next year with the leading American neurologist and former Surgeon-General Dr. William Hammond's rejoinder,

"Ah, I thought, cocaine! Out with you, prophylactic phial!"

Cocaine and the So-Called Cocaine Habit. Hammond had been using cocaine extensively, both medicinally for a spinal irritation and as a general tonic; he had drunk it, injected it, taken large doses (a gram injected over twenty minutes), and prescribed large doses to others. His conclusion was that the cocaine habit was "similar to the tea or coffee habit." Unlike opiate habits, where the patient clearly manifested physical dependence on the drug, Hammond insisted that there wasn't "a single instance of a well-pronounced cocaine habit" where the addict couldn't simply stop taking the drug by the use of will-power. The debate continued to swing backward and forward for the rest of the century, assisted no end by the ponderous and constantly-shifting definitions of addiction which were obscurely formulated in terms of heredity, morbid craving, diathesis and moral insanity.

Hammond's robust self-experimentation with cocaine points, however, to a possible objection to Freud's method: not that he experimented too recklessly, but too cautiously. Unlike Humphry Davy, who took nitrous oxide in huge and heroic doses and combinations, Freud had never taken cocaine in anything other than small amounts, and had never personally felt any craving to take more — rather, as he observed in *Über Coca*, a slight revulsion at the idea of further or larger doses. Thus he was taken by surprise when treating Ernst Fleischl to discover that uncontrolled use of the pure drug set up a whole new dynamic of effects, including powerful cravings, massive escalation of doses, inability to eat or sleep, chaotic mental processes and paranoid hallucinations.

A final illustration of the effect of Freud's subsequent fame on the cocaine debate should perhaps be the toxicologist Louis Lewin's *Phantastica*, an influential pharmacology text published late in his career in the 1920s. When Lewin mentions "the unfortunate theory that morphinism could be cured by cocaine," the implied reference to Freud is clear, and he continues, "I at once objected [in 1885], predicting a 'two-fold craving'. This, and worse, is what in fact happened. Cocaine was soon used by itself as a pleasure-producing agent." Thus the blame for the recreational use of cocaine is laid squarely at Freud's door; but we also have a letter written by Lewin in 1887, on a steamer bound for New York, when he finds himself a little dizzy and with a headache. "Ah! I thought, cocaine!", he writes. "Out with you, prophylactic phial... 0.05gr cocaine disappeared, dizziness and headache vanished magically; cheerfulness returned and I inhaled the refreshing sea breeze with delight."

So the idea that Freud's work represented a general turning against self-experimentation seems to be one which was imposed retrospectively, but the 1880s do represent a point where a series of medico-scientific objections to self-experimentation begin to emerge — not so much to the theory as to the practice — though as we shall see they don't amount at this stage to a presumption against it.

The first objection, as outlined already, is to do with changing notions of medical responsibility: that if medical authority is to manifest itself across a broader public health culture, then self-experimenting doctors and scientists become in a sense responsible for the abuses of drugs which they champion as "miracles of science." A second objection relates to the spread of degeneration theory, an influential movement in psychiatry within which, from its founder Benedict Augustin Morel onwards, substances like hashish and opium were believed to be environmental poisons, self-experimentation with which could lead to inherited weakness, transgenerational decline and even cretinism in successive generations. Degeneration's influence broadened and deepened through the period, spreading from French psychiatry across continental Europe, to Britain and America by the end of the nineteenth century.

A third objection to subjective testimony — one which was presented sporadically from at least the eighteenth century onwards — is that it takes an "expert witness" to produce subjective evidence which is of any value. We hear this type of claim for the primacy of the physician from Moreau de Tours and even from La Mettrie, but by the 1880s we find it more generally formulated that these drugs are only of interest in subjects with remarkable or trained minds. This claim also goes back implicitly to Davy and his choice of experimental subjects of "genius" for his *Researches*, and explicitly to Thomas De Quincey who states famously that "if a man whose talk is of oxen should become an opium-eater, the probability is, that (if he is not too dull to dream at all) he will dream about oxen." We receive this view in the 1880s from professional authorities like the leading Scottish psychiatrist Sir James Crichton Browne, self-experimenter with nitrous oxide, who writes in *The Lancet* that nitrous oxide's effects "in persons of

average mental calibre... are pleasant and stimulating but in no way remarkable; but in persons of superior mental power, they become thrilling and apocalyptic. A working man who inhales the gas intimates on his recovery that he felt very happy, as if he had had a little too much beer, and a philosopher announces that the secret of the universe had been, for one rapt moment, made plain to him." In the climate of the late nineteenth century, where the immoderate habits of the working classes were an acute cause of anxiety, it was important for "serious" researchers to stress that the activity in which they were engaged differed from the public intoxications of an earlier era not merely in degree but in kind.

A fourth objection to self-experimentation at the end of the century was the spread of temperance ideals and the progressive medicalization of the idea that intoxication itself was an atavistic habit which had no place in modern civilization — but this objection too was far from final. The most striking example which I've found of this is the eminent doctor and temperance enthusiast Benjamin Ward Richardson, who travelled to Draperstown in Ulster in 1878 to witness an outbreak of ether mania which was causing great concern in the pages of the *Journal of Inebriety*: "What guarantee is there," asked a member of the Society for the Study and Cure of Inebriety, "against [ether] spreading over the length and breadth of Ireland and clouding the spirit and sapping the physique of the finest peasantry in the world?" Richardson's account considers the problem in detail but concludes most surprisingly with a personal account of his own self-experimentation with ether, following self-consciously in the footsteps of Humphry Davy.

Whereas the popular use of ether is seen to a greater or lesser extent as a public menace, the precedent of Davy — who remains the proverbial self-experimenter throughout the century — gives Richardson permission to explore the alien shores of consciousness which ether reveals. He cites Davy's "memorable, perfect and original work" on nitrous oxide as a milestone in modern science: "a description of intoxication refined to the extremest degree." Within the Temperance context in which he's writing he's particularly careful to characterize Davy's combination of the gas with large quantities of alcohol as an example of self-sacrificing scientific heroism, to which "for the sake of experiment" he "subjected himself systematically."

Richardson turns out, in fact, to be something of an ether connoisseur. Methyl ether — the commonest compound — is apparently the best, and in his view "more pleasurable in action when inhaled than nitrous oxide." Ethyl ether is inferior — "grosser," and producing nothing more than "foolish dreams, forgotten upon awakening." But on methyl ether Richardson reports, very deliberately in the style of Davy, the sensation "as I came under the influence, that periods of time were extended immeasurably... the small room in which I sat was extended into a space which could not be measured... the ticking of the clock was like a musical clang from a cymbal with an echo; and all things touched felt as if some interposing, gentle current moved between them and the fingers." His final assessment of the experience both concurs with Davy and prefigures William James: "They who have felt this condition, have lived as it were in another life, however transitory, are easily led to declare with Davy that 'Nothing exists but thoughts'."

So despite the various objections to self-experimentation which gather around the time of Freud's cocaine episode, it's striking that self-experimentation among scientists, artists and philosophers remains not only permissible but in some contexts admirable. There are many significant examples during the 1880s and 1890s, such as William James' experiments with nitrous oxide, which are central to his *Varieties of Religious Experience* — again in the now-familiar context of demonstrating that material causes can produce sublime or spiritual effects. James was the most famous of a number of consciousness researchers, parapsychologists and religious enthusiasts to make these claims for nitrous oxide in the 1880s and 1890s — others included the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Professor William Ramsay, the art historian John Addington Symonds and, as we've seen, Sir James Crichton-Browne.

Lewin was unable to determine which dogs were tripping...

But perhaps the most comprehensive example of the continuation of self-experimentation into the 1890s and beyond is furnished by the story of the discovery of mescaline — both its chemical isolation and the understanding of its effects. This followed a trajectory from the investigation of the ritual use of the peyote cactus in Native American worship, through to laboratory trials, subjective assays and eventually the isolation of the psychoactive chemical, mescaline, and was assembled by the combination of a self-experimenting anthropologist, a self-experimenting psychiatrist, a self-experimenting psychologist and a self-experimenting pharmacologist.

The peyote cactus was drawn to the attention of the scientific world by the anthropologist James Mooney, who reported on its use by Native American tribesmen to the Smithsonian Bureau of Ethnography. His report to the Smithsonian doesn't mention his self-experimentation, but he comes clean in a subsequent paper for the *Therapeutic Gazette*. Mooney then gave samples of the cactus to various scientists including D.W. Prentiss, a doctor and medical lecturer at Columbia University. Prentiss gave samples of it to volunteer subjects under laboratory conditions, but found it hard to make sense of his conclusions: his first subject reported a blissful experience, his second a nightmarish and paranoid episode where he was convinced

that the doctors were trying to poison him. The problem of the same drug having different, indeed polar opposite effects on different subjects is one which had been noted with mind-altering substances from the Bristol Circle's nitrous oxide experiments onwards, and which still persists in attempts to describe psychoactive drug effects: cannabis, for example, has been repeatedly demonstrated to cause both a sense of relaxed well-being and acute paranoid anxiety. But this problem was addressed by the self-experimentation of the famous American physician Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell, whose subjective account of peyote was delivered to the American Neurological Society and published in the *BMJ* in 1896. Mitchell's account, combined with Mooney's elucidation of the difference between taking peyote in an Indian ritual context and a laboratory, demonstrated that this polarity of effects was only confusing when observed objectively, and that a subjective sense of the quality of the experience made sense of it immediately.

Mitchell may have entered into his self-experiment with hopes of finding in mescaline a medical treatment — perhaps a component of the rest-cure — but his interest after the experience shifted, like Davy's and Moreau's, to more abstract forms of cognitive research. "Here is unlocked a storehouse of glorified memorial treasures," he records. "No-one has told us what visions come to the Red Man. I would like to know if those of the navy would be like those of the artist." Mitchell's account inspired the British critic and sexologist Havelock Ellis to sample peyote and produce a measured description of its aesthetic effects in the *Contemporary Review* the next year.

Meanwhile the active ingredient of the peyote cactus was proving difficult to isolate: the plant contained many different alkaloids and it was by no means clear which one was acting so strikingly on the mind. There were two chemists working on this problem for several years, both in Germany: the famous toxicologist Louis Lewin in Berlin and the professor of pharmacology at Leipzig, Arthur Heffter. Lewin proceeded by feeding doses of various alkaloidal extracts to dogs, but was unable to determine which dogs were tripping; Heffter meanwhile self-experimented with his extracts and won the race to identify mescaline in 1897.

The mescaline story demonstrates the continued importance of self-experimentation across a broad range of disciplines in the 1890s, and it's no surprise to note that scientific self-experimentation with drugs like mescaline continued long into the twentieth century. Walter Benjamin participated and wrote about clinical trials with it in Frankfurt in the 1920s, and avant-garde artists like Henri Michaux and Stanislav Witkiewicz wrote and painted experimentally under its influence. In 1930 the King's College Hospital specialist Macdonald Critchley self-experimented with it under laboratory conditions — I have a newspaper clipping from the London *Evening Standard*, which is simply a news report of Critchley's subjective account under the headline "Drug Dream Tests" and the subheader "Whizzing Chairs Vision" — which suggests that in 1930 this type of self-experimentation was in itself unproblematic both in the eyes of scientific professionals and the reading public. This sequence of mescaline reportage stretches on unbroken to its most famous example, Aldous Huxley's *Doors of Perception*, published in 1953.

So when did the praxis of self-experimentation with mind-altering drugs fall outside the remit of science? This brief survey of the nineteenth century story suggests that, although problems with self-experimentation were posited during this period, its exclusion belongs to a far more recent era — the era, in fact, when most people think the story of drugs began. But is it possible that this scientific exclusion, although presented today as final, is in fact more provisional than it appears? Would many of today's professional scientists secretly still agree with Sir James Crichton-Browne's view that self-experimentation by scientists is largely unproblematic and indeed of scientific interest, but the same behavior among the general population is "abuse" — medically problematic and of no scientific interest? This would surely be a difficult position for the sciences to maintain in public today, and it may be this difficulty which accounts for the disappearance of self-experimentation from the academy.

But this may, of course, not be such a tragic ending as it seems. After all, the vacuum which science has left hasn't only compromised the credibility of the medical profession and indeed scientific authority in general, but has left the foreseeable future of one of the great natural sciences in the hands of us amateurs.

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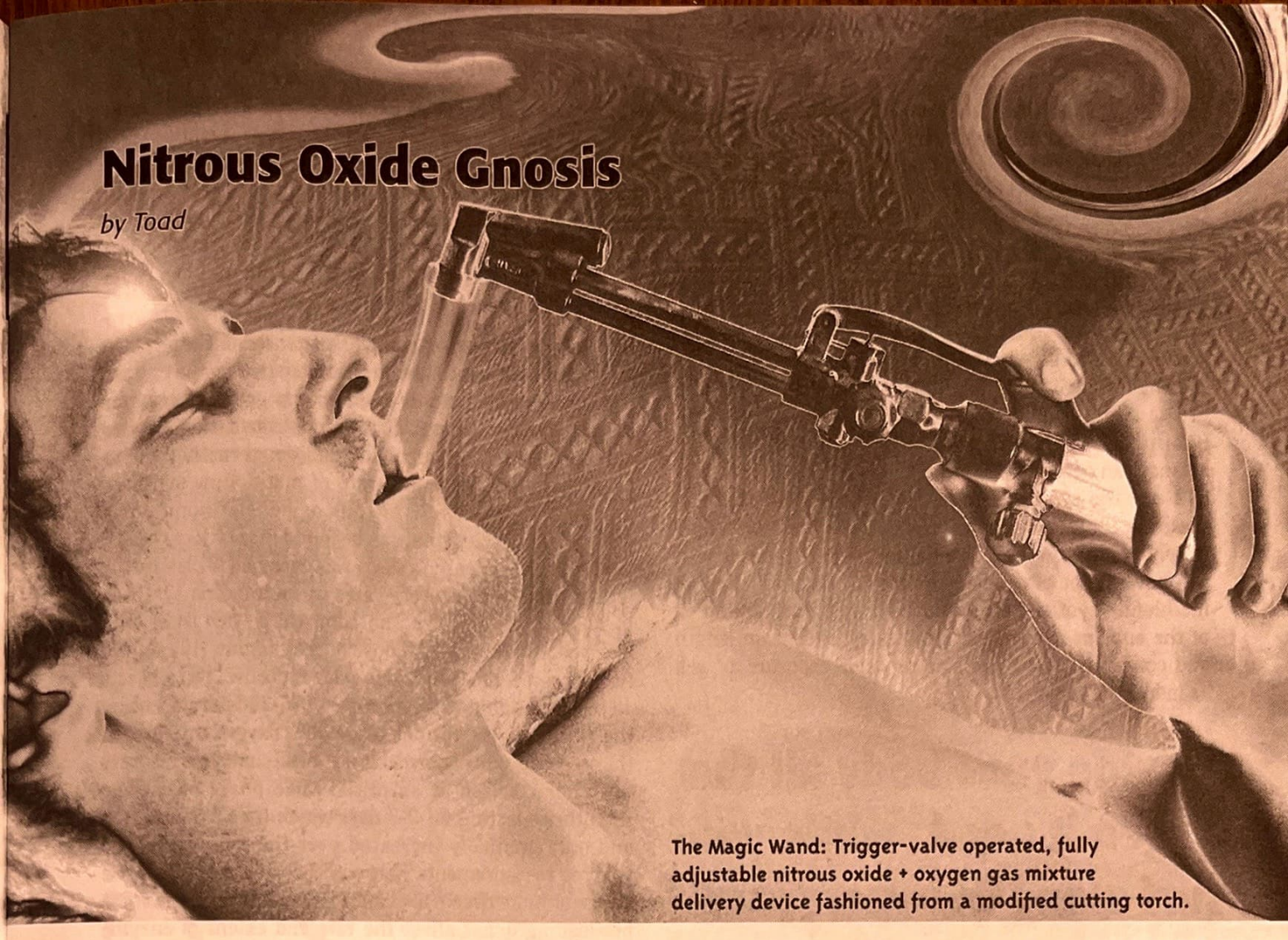
Nitrous Oxide Gnosis

by Toad



The Magic Wand: Trigger-valve operated, fully adjustable nitrous oxide + oxygen gas mixture delivery device fashioned from a modified cutting torch.

When used alone nitrous oxide can be somewhat fun and a generally pleasant experience, but when combined with mushrooms, LSD, or similar psychedelics, it becomes a dissociative stargate par excellence. Taking a few hits of nitrous during the peak of a psychedelic experience can bring time nearly to a standstill and reveal inner cycles of the manifesting universe. I'm sure many readers know precisely what I'm talking about as this seems to be a relatively popular practice among psychedelic connoisseurs. Nitrous oxide can also be very useful for shifting gears during a trip and breaking up repetitive thought loops. All in all nitrous is a unique tool with many possible applications for the psychedelic explorer.

Having recently acquired a taste for nitrous along with a plentiful supply, I thought it would be wise to do some research before partaking in its pleasures. I was quite familiar with the stories of dentists and habitual users experiencing nerve damage due to vitamin B12 deficiencies caused by the gas, but I really wasn't up to speed on the physiological mechanics involved nor the exact usage parameters.

With the desire to repeat my experiences and experiment further with nitrous, I set out to answer a few key questions. How often and for how long can I enjoy the gas without causing any major physical imbalance? What are the pharmacological mechanics of its actions and what are the possible repercussions? Are there any adjuncts or supplements that can be used to lessen the detrimental aspects of the gas? In this article I will present some pertinent data points uncovered from the medical literature that will allow readers to form a more educated opinion.

So let's get right down to business and dig into the dark side of nitrous oxide. It's well known that prolonged exposure to nitrous oxide can cause adverse effects in the blood, nervous, and reproductive systems of humans. Pernicious anemia may become evident along with signs of impaired nerve function such as numbness, tingling and burning sensations in the extremities. Depression and impaired mental function may also occur. Other symptoms can include paleness, fatigue, shortness of breath, diarrhea, and heart and nervous system disorders. One of the most serious side effects of nitrous is that it can interfere with DNA synthesis. This effect has been observed with nitrous oxide exposures of as little as 2 hours (Amos RJ. 1982; Nunn JF. 1986).

The various side effects and nerve degeneration caused by excessive use of nitrous are very similar to what is seen with vitamin B12 deficiencies. This is because nitrous

Illustration by Toad

oxide effectively disrupts the metabolic pathway of vitamin B12 in the body. To understand the mechanics of this process, one first has to know a little about the metabolic pathway. Once absorbed into the body vitamin B12 gets actively bound to the enzyme methionine synthase. The combination compound B12+methionine synthase is the bioavailable form of vitamin B12 that gets utilized by the body for the various metabolic processes. It has been shown that nitrous oxide irreversibly oxidizes and inactivates the essential enzyme methionine synthase, and thus changes the existing B12+methionine synthase in the body to an unusable form. Once the existing B12+methionine synthase has been deactivated, physical balance can only be restored by absorption of new vitamin B12 and the synthesis of new methionine synthase in the body. Physical balance can't be restored by simply supplementing with additional vitamin B12 because it will not become bioavailable unless the body has enough methionine synthase enzyme to activate it. Just how much of the enzyme gets knocked out is dependent on length and concentration of the nitrous oxide exposure as well as individual sensitivity.

Provide your body all the oxygen it needs while you surf along in hyperspace!

To more fully define the exact rate of methionine synthase inactivation, a group of scientists performed a study (Royston & Nunn 1988) on 20 human volunteers who were already scheduled to undergo abdominal surgery. The study required taking 800mg biopsies of the patient's liver at various times during a nitrous oxide exposure. It's interesting to note that most of the research in this field had been previously performed on rodents, and the results of the animal testing could be quite misleading if one tries to extrapolate the data to humans. Rodents are far more sensitive to the enzyme inactivation effects of nitrous. In rats half of their total methionine synthase was inactivated after a 5.4 minute exposure with a 70% nitrous oxide 30% oxygen mixture. Humans proved to be much more resilient, with the average inactivation half time being 46 minutes. There was considerable variation and personal sensitivity noted in the rate of enzyme inactivation in the patients tested. Some normal enzyme values were found with nitrous exposures up to 75 minutes, while one subject was overly sensitive with an abnormally low value appearing after a 40 minute exposure. This makes it somewhat difficult to predict the exact rate of inactivation and provide a precise estimation of the effects. However it gives us a pretty good indication that single exposures of less than 25 minutes are most likely harmless and probably not inactivating enough methionine synthase to cause a problem. This is certainly not the case with repeated exposures however, and care must be taken to avoid a cumulative effect. There is anecdotal evidence that even very short exposures of 5-10 minutes can cause imbalances if repeated on regular basis.

Another interesting study (Christensen & Guttormsen 1994) can shed some light on how often one should partake in nitrous oxide as well as provide a good strategy for harm reduction through dietary supplementation. In vitro data suggested that supplying additional methionine to cells decreased the initial rate of methionine synthase inactivation caused by nitrous oxide. Methionine is a common amino acid that can be found in your local health food store. Christensen's study was designed to classify the inactivation and recovery rates of methionine synthase in normal test subjects and compare it with those who received an oral pre-load dose of methionine (100mg/kg) two hours prior to the nitrous oxide exposure. Test subjects all received significant exposures of 75-230 minutes using the standard 70% nitrous oxide 30% oxygen mixture. In the control group of normal test subjects, enzyme recovery was characterized by an initial rapid phase of enzyme resynthesis lasting for 2-3 days which then slowed down and only gradually increased over the next week. The enzyme measurements were well below the preoperative levels for more than 8 days after the exposure. Methionine pre-loading didn't affect the rate and extent of enzyme inactivation, however it did significantly enhance the recovery rate. In patients who received the methionine pre-load, enzyme levels were equal to, and in some cases even exceeded the preoperative level within 5-7 days after the exposure. These results suggest that it would be wise to consume copious amounts (4-8g depending on your body weight) of methionine, vitamin B12 and folinic acid prior to a heavy nitrous session in order to assist the body and shorten the recovery process. This data also suggests that there should be at least a 1-2 week interval between nitrous sessions to allow for complete enzyme recovery.

I would highly recommend that experimenters go to the extra effort and acquire a tank of pure oxygen to mix with their nitrous. Using oxygen mixtures provides a much nicer overall effect and will prevent the possibility of hypoxia (decreased oxygen content in the blood and body tissues). It should be noted that unless the gas is administered with 20% oxygen hypoxia can be induced. In order to achieve a substantial effect from nitrous a 50% or greater concentration must be inhaled. If you were to inhale a mix 50% nitrous and 50% regular air you would still only be receiving 10% oxygen which is not enough.

Hypoxia can be quite a serious condition and in some cases may cause irreversible brain damage. Be sure to provide your body all the oxygen it needs while you surf along carefree in hyperspace! I recommend using no less than 30% oxygen for the nitrous mix. Oxygen can be easily and cheaply obtained from your local specialty gas company. After speaking with a gas company manager I learned that the only difference between the medical grade oxygen and the oxygen used for welding applications is the tank and the price tag. Both are filled from the same pure oxygen tank at the supplier. There is a slight possibility of contamination with a used welding tank, however this can easily be avoided by purchasing a new tank and only filling it with pure oxygen.

Users should also bone up on all the nitrous oxide basics as this article is not meant to be a comprehensive, all inclusive review. More information can be found in the Erowid nitrous oxide vault at http://www.erowid.org/chemicals/nitrous/nitrous.shtml and the Lycaeum nitrous oxide archives at http://leda.lycaeum.org/Chemicals/Nitrous_oxide.388.shtml.

Just say N2O !

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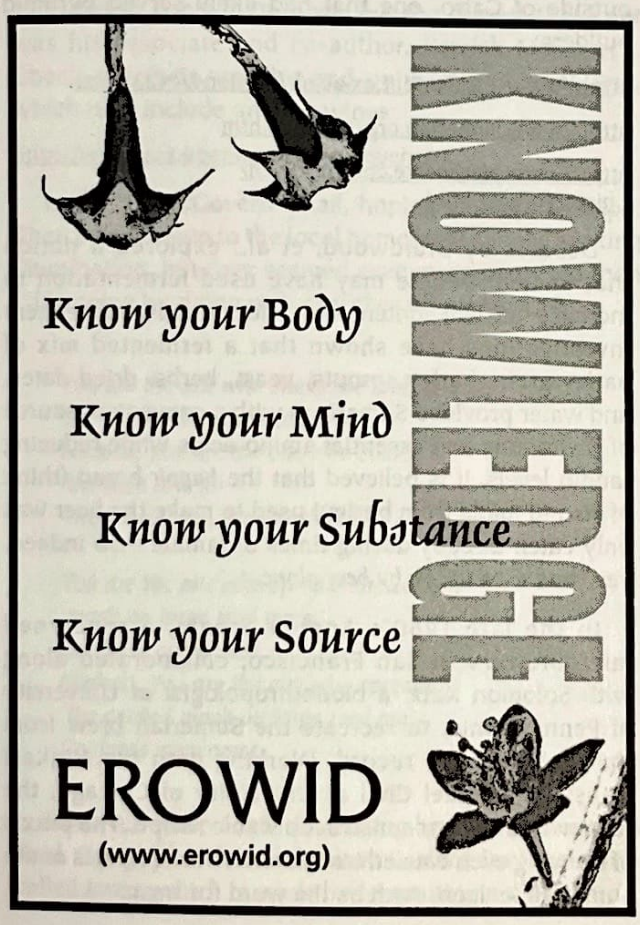
Toad is a frequent contributor to The Entheogen Review.



Ninkasi: Ritual Brewmaking

by Paco Xander Nathan

Borne of the flowing water (...)
Tenderly cared for by the Ninhursag,
Borne of the flowing water (...)
Tenderly cared for by the Ninhursag,

Having founded your town by the sacred lake,
She finished its great walls for you,
Ninkasi, having founded your town by the sacred lake,
She finished its great walls for you

About 10,000 years ago, a grain now called barley was domesticated in a region now called Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon.

About 50 years ago, a few guys named Robert Braidwood, Jonathan Sauer, Hans Helback, and Paul Manglesdorf published articles in *Scientific American* and *American Anthropologist* examining the eternal question, "Did man once live by beer alone?"

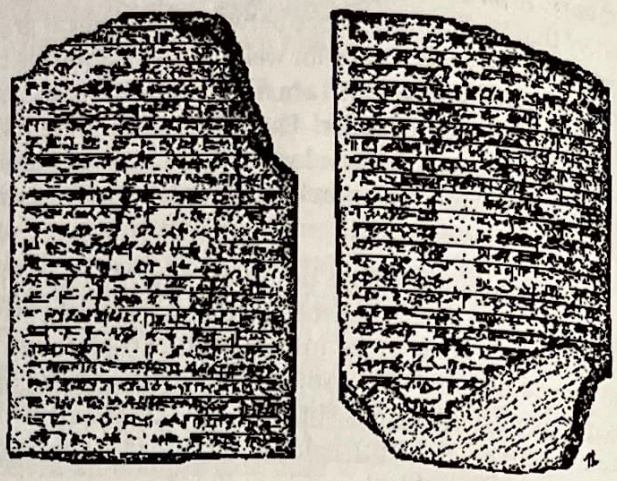
About half way between those two events, the Sumerians praised a goddess named Ninkasi for her guardianship over *their* high-tech venture of the day: brewing beer from barley.

About 5 minutes ago, I just finished another cold mug of Ninkasi's brew, handcrafted in a way faithful to the ancient Sumerian recipe: a delicious amber effervescence "borne of the flowing water."

Pardonnez-moi, si je suis un peu ivre.

Your father is Enki, Lord Nidimmud,
Your mother is Ninti, the queen of the sacred lake,
Ninkasi, Your father is Enki, Lord Nidimmud,
Your mother is Ninti, the queen of the sacred lake.

You are the one who handles the dough,
[and] with a big shovel,
Mixing in a pit, the bappir with sweet aromatics,
Ninkasi, You are the one who handles
the dough, [and] with a big shovel,
Mixing in a pit, the bappir with [date]-honey.



As it turns out, Sumerian tablets translated in 1964 yielded the *Hymn To Ninkasi*, the contents of which seemed curiously much like a recipe for beer; stanzas of that hymn are the ones shown here. The stone tablets – which date back nearly 4000 years and reflect a Sumerian beermaking culture 6000 years old – were discovered at an ancient Egyptian bakery/brewery outside of Cairo, one that had likely served pyramid builders:

http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/section4/c4231.htm

http://www.sumerian.org/sumlogo.htm

http://www.bierboerse.com/englisch/historyofbeer.html

Debates by Braidwood, et al., explored a notion that ancient people may have used fermentation to increase nutrient content and reduce toxins. Subsequent investigations have shown that a fermented mix of barley grain, barley sprouts, yeast, herbs, dried dates, and water provided Sumerians with a convenient source of B vitamins and essential amino acids while reducing tannin levels. It is believed that the *bappir* bread (think of *biscotti* made from barley) used to make the beer was only eaten directly during times of famine – so indeed, yes, *man used to live by beer alone.*

In the late 1980's Anchor Steam, a renowned microbrewery in San Francisco, collaborated along with Solomon Katz, a bioanthropologist at University of Pennsylvania, to recreate the Sumerian brew from the archeological record. Working with the Ninkasi translator, Miguel Civil at University of Chicago, the team was able to reconstruct a viable recipe. The praxis of brewing even caused translators to revise parts of the Sumerian lexicon, such as the word for *sugar.*

You are the one who bakes the bappir
in the big oven,
Puts in order the piles of hulled grains,
Ninkasi, you are the one who bakes
the bappir in the big oven,
Puts in order the piles of hulled grains...

You are the one who waters the malt
set on the ground,
The noble dogs keep away even the potentates,
Ninkasi, you are the one who waters the malt
set on the ground,
The noble dogs keep away even the potentates.

Anchor held a private tasting for their Ninkasi brew, and apparently the experiment was a success. Unfortunately, the team didn't publish their recipe. I tried calling Anchor, and had a great chat with one of their brewers, Philip Rogers, but didn't score a recipe. Rogers recalled the experiment fondly, but not many at Anchor had enjoyed the taste. It was more like a cross between barleywine and champagne, light and slightly bitter – a far cry from Anchor's trademark heavily-hopped and deeply bodied brews:

http://www.anchorbrewing.com/

http://hubris.engin.umich.edu/Beer/Threads/HBD/1992/1015

I tried to contact Dr. Katz, but the closest that I got was his associate and co-author, Patrick McGovern. Check out their website and publications sometime, which now include ancient wines:

http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~mcgovern/

I sent Dr. McGovern email, hoping to score a recipe. Then I went down to the local homebrew supply, seeking illumination, but they seemed even more confused than I'd become by doing web searches about Ninkasi...

You are the one who soaks the malt in a jar
The waves rise, the waves fall.
Ninkasi, you are the one who soaks
the malt in a jar
The waves rise, the waves fall.

You are the one who spreads the cooked
mash on large reed mats,
Coolness overcomes.
Ninkasi, you are the one who spreads
the cooked mash on large reed mats,
Coolness overcomes.

However, when I described using *bappir*, a few neurons fired. One guy had heard about an Eastern European brew called *kvass*, which is made by fermenting rye bread:

http://hbd.org/brewery/cm3/recs/12_12.html

http://realbeer.com/spencer/cats-meow/chap12.html#anchor11

Coolness, indeed, overcomes. Note that Eastern Europe is not altogether geographically far from the ancient site of Sumeria. Moreover, the Russian word *kvass* seems quite close both to the Sumerian root word *kas* (which signifies "man of beer loaf") and the subsequent Babylonian word for beer, *kassi*, derived from the name of our dear lady of the sacred waters, Ninkasi:

http://www.winexwired.com/archives/beer3.htm

Searching online some more, a paleontologist named Ed Hitchcock had become intrigued by Anchor's experiment. He decided to roll the clocks back to a pivotal period a few thousand years prior to Sumeria and craft a beer using 9000-year-old culinary techniques – roughly, about the time when barley first became cultivated:

http://www.brewingtechniques.com/library/backissues/issue2.5/hitchcock.html

Those were both encouraging finds, but still no recipe for Ninkasi. About this time, I got an email reply from Dr. McGovern, who seemed to be involved in some private microbrewery venture dedicated to repopularizing ancient alcohols. He did not feel compelled to disclose any recipes. So much for the noble cause of Science...

Thumbing through the bookshelves again at Austin Homebrew, I discovered a title that referenced a Ninkasi recipe, published by none other than Ray Daniels, editor for *Zymurgy, the Journal of the American Homebrewers Association*:

http://www.beertown.org/AHA/

http://www.beertown.org/BP/101ideas.htm

http://www.austinhomebrew.com/

Perhaps the best way to get a copy of Daniels' book, *101 Ideas for Homebrew Fun*, is to join AHA, which for $33 (USD) also includes a subscription to *Zymurgy* – quite a good deal for the initiate brewer. At least that's what I did. However, I was too impatient to wait for their mailing, so I called the Daniels home. Ray was busy with a brew, but his wife graciously read the "Bappir Beer" recipe over the phone after running my Visa number.

You are the one who holds with both hands
the great sweet wort,
Brewing [it] with honey and wine
(You the sweet wort to the vessel)
Ninkasi, (...)
(You the sweet wort to the vessel)

The filtering vat, which makes
a pleasant sound,
You place appropriately on [top of]
a large collector vat.
Ninkasi, the filtering vat,
which makes a pleasant sound,
You place appropriately on [top of]
a large collector vat.

As a result, a small but dedicated and highly syncretic team of bioanthropological researchers here in Austin reenacted the Ninkasi ritual during the Spring of 2001. I will share our brewing log with you – one that embellishes on Daniels' work, along with suggestions from Rogers, Hitchcock, and others. Please do check out AHA and your local homebrew supply if you are interested in learning to brew... their help became invaluable in our experiment. First though, a few more URLs of interest:

http://www.rensselaer.edu/dept/chem-eng/Biotech-Environ/beer/history1.htm

http://www.geocities.com/ancientbeer/recreating.html

http://www.ahtg.net/ibt.html

Also, please keep in mind that certain technical aspects of the brewing process demand that researchers sing the ancient incantations aloud, preferably in Sumerian if sufficiently fluent. Given enough of the product to evaluate, language selection becomes less and less of an issue.

dnin-ka-si kac si-im duglahtan-na de-a-zu id idigna id buranun-na saj sig-ga-am

29 Jan 2001:

360 g kamut flour
180 g barley flour
50 g barley malt
50 ml chopped dates
100 ml honey
500 ml warm water
4 tsp baking yeast

Let water, honey, and yeast stand for 5 minutes. Sift together all the other ingredients, except for dates. Add liquid to dry mix, then fold in dates. Knead (added 20 g barley flour), then let rise 30 minutes. Pre-heat oven to 177 °C, bake for 25 minutes. Allow loaf to cool, then slice and bake for an additional 10 minutes on sheets.

The resulting loaf was too moist and tasted too yeasty – though ancient bappir would have been more yeasty than contemporary breads, which helps in brewing. The bappir tasted better after being allowed to dry inside the fridge for a couple of days.

We ended up eating this bappir and making another batch for the beer. Needed less water, and at least double the dates. Would like to replace some honey with date syrup, and add a tsp of rue and tarragon, as the ancient bakers perhaps did. Anchor Brewing suggested using a water smoker to dry the slices.

10 Feb 2001:

500 g whole organic dates
1 package dry ale yeast

Inoculate the dates by mixing with the ale yeast, then sit aside in a large covered pot for 3 days. If you don't use organic ingredients, you might not get beer, since preservatives can destroy the fermenting process.

11 Feb 2001:

500 g two-row pilsner malt
300 g kamut flour
200 g barley flour
150 ml honey
500 ml warm water
1 tsp baking yeast

Mix malt, honey, and water. Stir enough to get the mixture evenly wet. Add flour gradually, mixing evenly. Place into a small bread loaf pan and let sit for 60 minutes. Bake for 90 minutes at 177 °C. Turn off oven, letting load remain until the oven cools, but be careful not to let it burn.

Note that barley sprouts could have been substituted for the malt. However, the author lacks sufficient initiation into the art of malting yet for that step, but it seems reasonably simple.

This bappir turned out quite well – much darker than the previous batch, and definitely more like a biscotti consistency. We decided to use it.

13 Feb 2001:

500 g two-row crushed pilsner malt
10 l cold water
bappir
inoculated dates

Fill the cold water into the pot containing the dates, then bring to a boil. Turn off heat, let cool for 15 minutes. Break the bappir into small chunks and add into the pot. Use a large spoon to crush the bread and dates, while stirring for 10 minutes. Add the malt, and stir well. Let cool to room temperature (overnight).

Pour this mixture into a plastic bucket-type fermenter (Sumerians dug pits and troughs) and pitch the yeast. Let this sit for 2-3 days.

17 Feb 2001:

Strain the wort through a filter – we used a stainless steel chinois. Obtained about 8 liters of fluid – murky, with some froth, resembling a Sierra Nevada beer.

The Hymn to Ninkasi, translation by Miguel Civil

Borne of the flowing water (...)
Tenderly cared for by the Ninhursag,
Borne of the flowing water (...)
Tenderly cared for by the Ninhursag,

Having founded your town by the sacred lake,
She finished its great walls for you,
Ninkasi, having founded your town by the sacred lake,
She finished its great walls for you

Your father is Enki, Lord Nidimmud,
Your mother is Ninti, the queen of the sacred lake,
Ninkasi, Your father is Enki, Lord Nidimmud,
Your mother is Ninti, the queen of the sacred lake.

You are the one who handles the dough,
[and] with a big shovel,
Mixing in a pit, the bappir with sweet aromatics,
Ninkasi, You are the one who handles
the dough, [and] with a big shovel,
Mixing in a pit, the bappir with [date]-honey.

You are the one who bakes the bappir
in the big oven,
Puts in order the piles of hulled grains,
Ninkasi, you are the one who bakes
the bappir in the big oven,
Puts in order the piles of hulled grains...

You are the one who waters the malt
set on the ground,
The noble dogs keep away even the potentates,
Ninkasi, you are the one who waters the malt
set on the ground,
The noble dogs keep away even the potentates.

You are the one who soaks the malt in a jar
The waves rise, the waves fall.
Ninkasi, you are the one who soaks
the malt in a jar
The waves rise, the waves fall.

You are the one who spreads the cooked
mash on large reed mats,
Coolness overcomes.
Ninkasi, you are the one who spreads
the cooked mash on large reed mats,
Coolness overcomes.

You are the one who holds with both hands
the great sweet wort,
Brewing [it] with honey and wine
(You the sweet wort to the vessel)
Ninkasi, (...)
(You the sweet wort to the vessel)

The filtering vat, which makes
a pleasant sound,
You place appropriately on [top of]
a large collector vat.
Ninkasi, the filtering vat,
which makes a pleasant sound,
You place appropriately on [top of]
a large collector vat.

When you pour out the filtered beer
of the collector vat,
It is [like] the onrush of
Tigris and Euphrates.
Ninkasi, you are the one who pours out the
filtered beer of the collector vat,
It is [like] the onrush of
Tigris and Euphrates.

20 Feb 2001:

Sampled the goods... No fizz, only a little alcohol, but it tastes great! Going to be ready to bottle.

23 Feb 2001:

1 dozen 750 ml bottles
40 g priming sugar
200 ml boiling water

Sterilize the bottles. Mix priming sugar into boiling water, then let that cool for 4 minutes (until room temperature). Add to beer. Priming is not necessary, but it adds an excellent texture to the resulting brew. Observed some head in the brew at this point.

Fill and cap bottles with a siphon or tap – as many as possible. We obtained ten bottles yield, plus one partial bottle that we stuck into the refrigerator. The rest were racked in a dark, cool closet.

01 Mar 2001:

Tasted the partially filled bottle. Tangy. Somewhat like a barleywine – good!

10 Apr 2001:

Opened the first bottle, emerging out of the darkness after its ninth week. While I was preparing our research team for a flat brew, warning them that it would be an acquired, ancient taste with probably very little head... BLAM! The bottle spewed open like a champagne and had a similar bubbly texture while drinking! Beautiful amber color. Light sparkle. Somewhat bitter, in a delicious way. Excellent flavor – the dates had transformed into a hint of oranges. Best served chilled.

When you pour out the filtered beer
of the collector vat,
It is [like] the onrush of
Tigris and Euphrates.
Ninkasi, you are the one who pours out the
filtered beer of the collector vat,
It is [like] the onrush of
Tigris and Euphrates.

I look in awe at the graven images depicting Sumerian beer fests: bowls filled with bappir brew, imbibers drinking eagerly through straws to filter the yeast sediment. Gazing about amongst my friends at our first tasting of the Ninkasi brew, our setting and expressions were not so different from the ones carved into stone thousands of years ago.

Travel back across the millennia, and imagine how early brewers of Sumeria, Babylon, and Egypt would view our access to technologies and perspectives today. Consequently, what magic might they expect of us now? Drink in their honor.

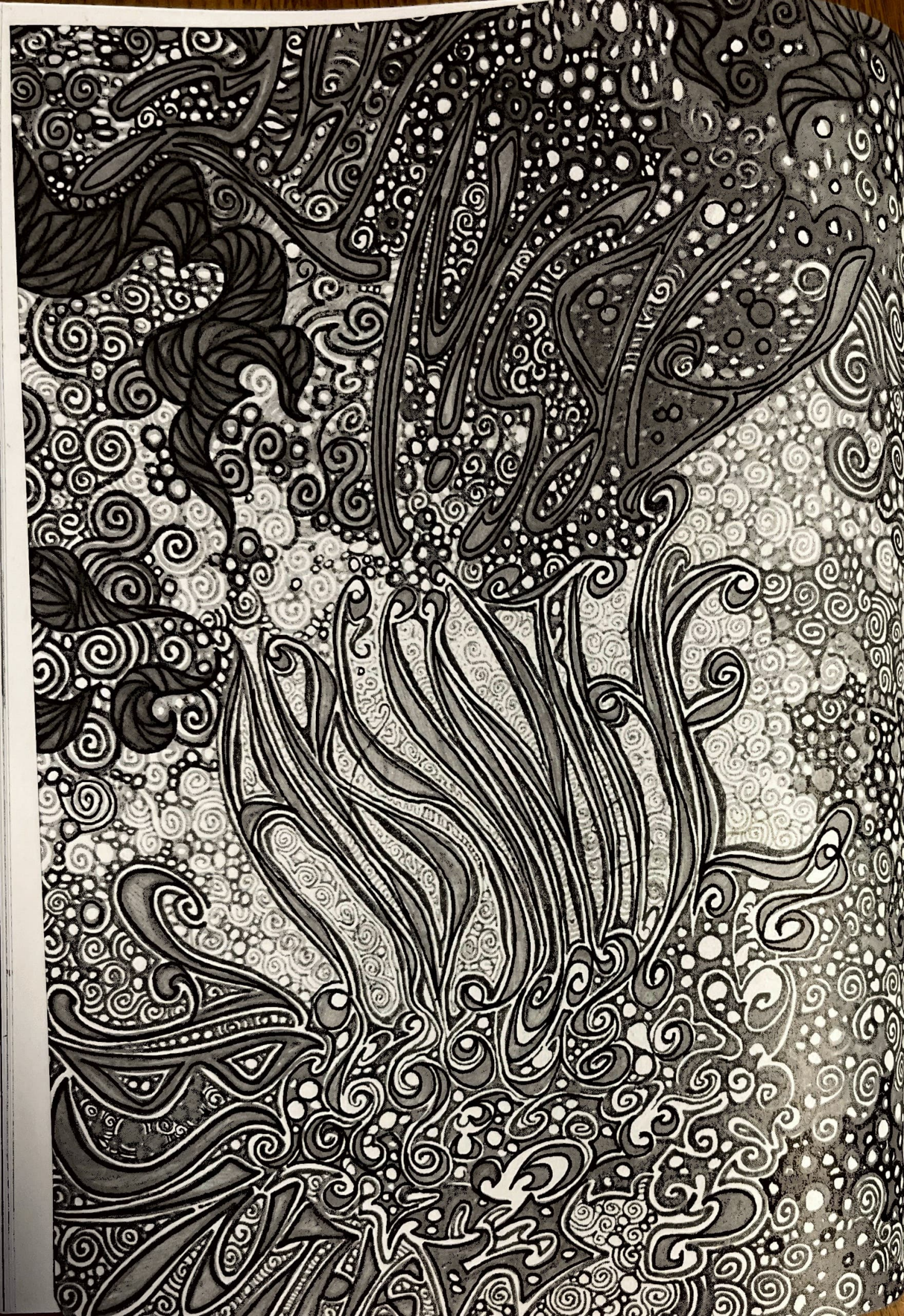
Ab-jow Ninkasi kheili khub-e! Ma'a salaama.

R.J. Braidwood, et al., "Symposium: Did Man Once Live by Beer Alone?", American Anthropologist 55, 515-526 (1953).

M. Civil, "A Hymn to the Beer Goddess and a Drinking Song," Studies Presented to A. Leo Oppenheim, 07 Jun 1964. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago: Chicago, IL, 67-89 (1964).

R. Daniels, 101 Ideas for Homebrew Fun, Brewers Publications, Boulder, CO (1998).

S.H. Katz and F. Maytag, "Brewing an Ancient Beer," Archaeology 44 (4), 24-27 (1991).



The Intrigue of Absinthe

by Michael Pinchera

Absinthe. Available at last! This cannot be. Yet, sure enough, an advertisement in the back of *Fortean Times* offered genuine absinthe — hawking it as a potent aphrodisiac that would "make her spread fast!" I had made my own variation of absinthe before (simply soaking wormwood herb in the anisette liqueur Pernod), but had never come across the real deal, as it is not commonly available in the US.

So like a good consumer, I immediately pointed my web browser to the URL provided in the ad. In researching this single company, as often happens when traversing the Net, I got lost, slipped on Yahoo! and landed somewhere different, somewhere very special. I landed on Martin Sebor's worldwide doorstep.

The Absinthe Guide describes Sebor's standard brew as "one of the most broadly herbal-tasting absinthes," crediting hyssop and other herbs with balancing the famously horrendous flavor of the green fairy. Sebor Absinth contains a maximum 10mg thujone/kg. Sebor-Absinth.com comes "highly recommended" by the Guide, receiving the best kudos of any company listed (not limited to Czech absinthe).

A quick examination of some other Czech-brands is startling. For example, Hill's Absinthe – the first brand of the new wave to make national news in the US (via some semi-famous financiers and an article in *Details*) – is torn apart. The Guide's one word capsule brings to mind a waste of time. "Windex," it says. It need be mentioned that Hill's is 70% alcohol, while Sebor ranges from 55%-60%.

Four years ago Kyle Bairnsfather, creator of the first online absinthe business and international distributor for Sebor Absinth, initially became interested in absinthe. This was during his third stay in the Czech Republic, a country he was originally sent to by the US Peace Corps to act as an Environmental Management Consultant after receiving his Masters degree in Urban and Regional Planning.

Thanks to Kyle Bairnsfather and Sebor's website, in a simple enough transaction consisting elementally of a $90 money order and about a month of waiting, I would come to possess 1.5 liters of some of the finest 21st century Czech absinthe.

Not illegal in any traditional sense, absinthe is "banned" throughout much of the developed world — a fact that has surely helped to fuel its sordid reputation as the most infamous alcoholic drink in modern history.

Intrigue. The genuine addictive quality of absinthe.

My sweet chaos goddess took little sip after little sip until her requested testing dosage was vanquished. Her comments on the taste: "Better than anything I've tried before!" referring to my shitty-tasting homebrew, some genuine absinthe of another brand, and a chilled anisette mock-absinthe drink served at the Old Absinthe House in New Orleans.

A little sip. The drink felt as though it were melting *into* my tongue. As though it disappeared before I swallowed.

Sebor Absinth is definitely its own unique blend of herbs and flavorants. It doesn't bombard the drinker (or lush or sipper as you may be) with the commonly sweet overkill of most other anisette liqueurs. Instead, there are dozens of other flavors that may tweak your fancy. "I cannot say what all of the ingredients are as that would be giving away secrets, but we use more than 15 different herbs, and no artificial colors," Bairnsfather explained. Somehow, without the massive dumping of anise, Mr. Sebor has managed to calm the ever-potent wormwood bitters. Magic? I cannot say. But I would presume some botanical sorcery.

I hadn't even finished the first glass when my eyes indeed felt as though they were floating up at a diagonal angle – towards the back of my head. But upwards, thus, they seemed to be opening wider. The vantage point I entered at this early state enabled me to view worldly things from several inches above my normal eye sockets.

Illustration by Christopher Blosser

And yet, it was not the same drunken state most would normally arise to after a couple shots of the standard half-EtOH hooch, such as vodka. I was past that.

As I finished off the last of the first glass, I paused to take note of the color once again. "How can that color be natural?" I thought. "It is one of the few, if not only absinthes, to be colored by chlorophyll," Bairnsfather said. This was indeed a marvelous fluorescent green plant extract.

I cannot fathom how certain other taste testing rats have been left with little more than a booze-related buzz after a decent helping of Sebor. For, indeed, I could feel the strangeness! There's no mistaking. Perhaps I'm a sociopathic optimist.

As the green elements entered me deeper, I noted a much more drunken state – bordering on "stupor" — at only two shots!? Wow.

My mind was racing to write. This fails to occur with standard hard liquor, and indeed, the closest I get with the aforementioned standard only comes after a half-dozen shots, at which point I can see neither page nor computer screen well enough to actually spread my literary garble unto it! Yet, I could see the monitor perfectly...and my typing ability was fine if not enhanced.

The state began to wane after a few hours, then...desire. I could say need, but I'd rather pass it off as "the want of further scientific exploration."

Two more shots entered the glass.

This time, I dropped a single ice cube in, not wanting to dilute the drink much, but to cool it. "I like Sebor Absinth straight, poured over crushed ice and with a couple of ounces of water added," Bairnsfather told. "The flavour speaks for itself. I do still have to taste each batch."

Some online connoisseurs claim that Sebor does not cloud well when water is added. And that is true, but drop an ice cube in and watch it float...look underneath it! You can see the cube melting, little oily swirls coming off the bottom like some crazed spermatozoa. It puts off the most marvelous spiraling trails. Not the typical "louche" (clouding effect) but still visually amusing.

"The louching is due to a compound called a terpene which is mainly from the anise plant," Bairnsfather explained. "Thus if you want absinthe to louche it will be prone to having a very strong anise taste which will overpower all the other flavors. Sebor Absinth louches well when poured over ice; since the temperature has a direct influence on the louche effect, the colder the absinthe, the more it will louche."

I drank this serving much quicker than the initial dosage, as I was not judging the merits of the flavor anymore. I was somewhere past that. After the first sip, I realized there were no ill effects from the wearing-off shots. Indeed, I was in a state very much like cannabis intoxication. My eyes felt red and tired, yet remained wide open. After the second serving was finished, I failed to re-enter the drunken state. The additional glass simply seemed to prolong the true high as it permeated my soft skull.

Stated simply, the feel is that of floating, leaving your body a little bit or growing into the walls of an ancient building where you take note of the depraved events commonly called "history" as they unfold beneath the often endless chatter of ghosts.

If nothing more than a deep curiosity, an absinthe quote from Oscar Wilde beckoned onto me:

"After the first glass you see things as you wish they were. After the second, you see things as they are not. Finally, you see things as they really are, and that is the most horrible thing in the world."

After sipping four shots, I began to meditate on this quote, for is he talking about such an intoxication where the alcohol in the drink is no longer of consequence? For this is where I was! And indeed, with the wormwood paving my perception, a strange relaxation and blasé state along the lines of raw opium (mourner's tea) pushed me on. Or rather it didn't push me anywhere; it occupied me. The key is to get past the alcohol.

Several more hours passed and I retired to bed. With Sebor Absinth, I was able to lay in bed floating around, thoughts drifting into truly interesting realms that bordered on the hearing of voices – dialogue entered my thoughts, yet I could not "hear" the voices truly. I have no doubt I'd have been able to with a little more drink.

I had no trouble sleeping that night. Sebor had treated me well. I was a bit tired the next morning, but after only six hours of sleep that is to be expected. Once out of bed, the level of sedation was typical. I found myself thinking about Sebor Absinth all throughout the next day...I wanted to explore it more...more... I desired it, but I have been able to overcome that desire...temporarily at least.

Since importing absinthe for one's own personal delight is open in a legally gray way to most all countries where it is banned, and since la fee verte's popularity is rising with the help of the Internet and due to savvy producers and distributors, a new green age may be on the horizon. The disinformation campaigns (both pro and con) surrounding

absinthe over the last century will be difficult to erase from the psyche of the masses, but that will have little impact on the determined connoisseur of today.

After these trials, I failed to pick up the absinthe stutter that had previously afflicted my speech centers following excess consumption of wormwood & Pernod. Not surprisingly, Bairnsfather had never heard of an "absinthe stutter."

Am I any different now than before I tried Sebor Absinth? No. But I can protest unequivocally that absinthe indeed lives up to its reputation as a strange intoxicant.

For those interested, assuming personal importation is permitted and there are no local laws prohibiting the shipment of liquor, the following URLs should prove useful.

la Fee Verte Absinthe Guide:

http://www.sepulchritude.com/chapelperilous/absinthe/absinthe-guide4.html

Sebor Absinth:

http://www.sebor-absinth.com

After writing this piece and showing it to some friends-in-the-know, doubt began to circulate — doubt that the activities surrounding the importation of so-called "personal quantities" of thujone-containing absinthe into the US are 100% legal.

Earth from Erowid explained, "The situation, as I understand it:

"1. It is illegal to sell thujone-containing absinthe in the US for human consumption.

"2. It is illegal for someone outside the US to sell thujone-containing absinthe to someone inside the US.

"3. It is not illegal to purchase thujone-containing absinthe for personal use in the US.

"4. It is not illegal to purchase thujone-containing absinthe for personal use from outside the United States.

"5. Thujone containing absinthe can be seized by US customs (if it appears to be for human consumption)."

I had never imagined that sending thujone-containing absinthe to the US would be a crime. Kyle Bairsfather agrees, claiming that Sebor packages have never been stopped by U.S. Customs (and rarely detained by the US Post Office for local infractions regarding the shipping of alcohol.) He says if there is such a law, he hasn't been informed of it. And if Earth is correct, then Kyle is the only one involved in breaking US law in selling his emerald diamond to the Land Of The Cheats & Home Of The Freebase. But U.S. law does not apply to Kyle since he lives in (and ships from) the Czech Republic.

"Some countries do have laws allowing for less or no thujone content, but nearly all of these countries only ban commercial production and sales. Thus, possession for personal consumption is allowed," Bairsfather said.

Bairnsfather says customs dealing with simple importation cause Sebor no trouble at all. "It once took a year to reach a customer in Brazil, but that was due to strange laws concerning alcohol. This is true to Sweden. In certain cases customs doesn't seize the package, but postal inspectors do."

"The FDA is much more worried about food problems and supplements and misused drugs than expensive, imported, weird, mildly poisonous liquor," Earth said.

Thus, the standard disclaimer applies...one will not become a criminal for importing absinthe even if in some manner the shipper has bent a rule or two. But we all know that US Customs Officers are fiends, so don't be too shocked if they do steal your package.

Michael Pinchera interviewed Stewart Lee Allen for Trip *#5, Dr. Karl Jansen for* Trip *#3, and Dennis McKenna for* Trip *#2.*

Illustration by Kathleen Fitzgerald

9-11: Our Wake-up Call

by James Kent
September 18, 2001

I had just woken up – the crust of sleep still in my eyes – when I heard the news from my wife. "Terrorists hijacked four planes and crashed two of them into the World Trade Center. One crashed into the Pentagon, the fourth one was flown into the ground." She looked worried, shocked, horrified. I didn't know what to say, but somehow I couldn't force myself to feel shock or terror. Now I admit that I am a cynical bastard, and I know full well that the human race can be ugly and cruel, and sometimes capable of conceiving and carrying out the most evil and heartless acts imaginable. And without seeing a moment of news footage, without having even a second to consider the weight of what I had just heard or count the number of lives that must have been taken by this single destructive act, my mind was forced to accept it as fact, the deed had been done. "So today is the day it happens," was all I could think. "9-11. Today is the day."

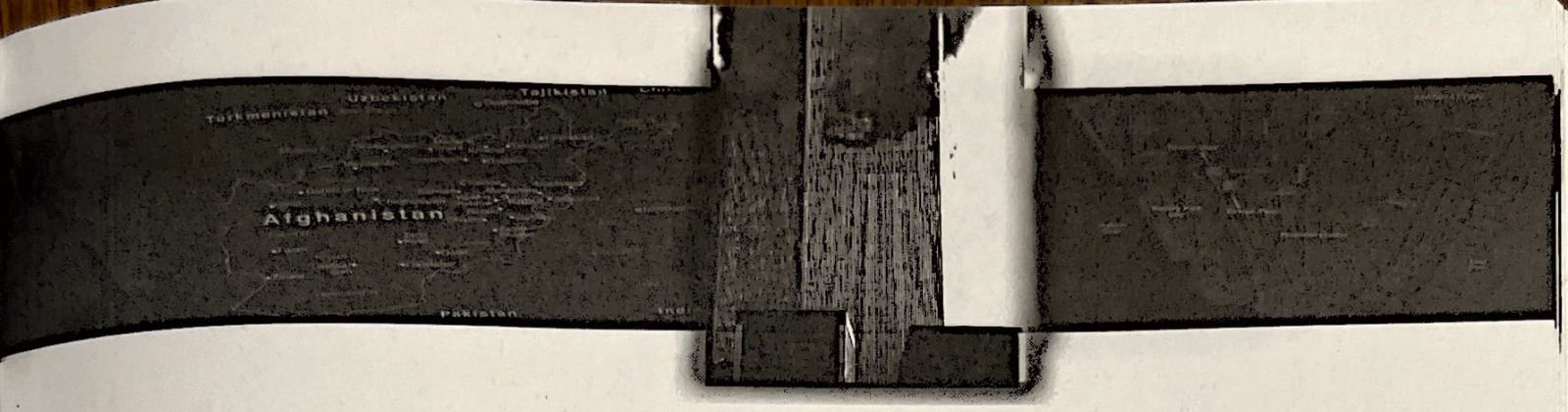
The attack on the World Trade Center was the unimaginable thing I had been expecting for so long, the next escalation in a long line of terrorist hammer strikes on the US economic, political, and military regime. It was the second attack on the World Trade Center within a decade, a victorious one this time, felling the twin monoliths of economic globalization with precision terror, topping the coup with an extra chocolate-covered fuck-you straight into the Pentagon. No messy nitrogen bombs needed, no high-powered explosives to smuggle across the border, just pocketknives and the will to kill and die for a cause; we supplied the rest. It went down like a rebel strike on the Death Star, the metaphoric symbol of the Evil Empire crushed under its own weight with one mighty blow. It's hard to say what stings more, the fact that we got hit or the knowledge that in this scenario *we're* the Evil Empire (how's that for a hard pill to swallow), and now we're being taken to task for our actions by holy warriors and rebel suicide forces led by the ascended Jedi Master Osama bin Kenobi.

I don't know if bin Laden is the real evil mastermind behind this stunning attack, but whoever orchestrated this disaster was definitely a sick genius, capable of turning a global giant's own might against itself, sending a distinct message to the world by smashing four-thousand tons of American technology and eighty-thousand gallons of high-octane jet fuel into the Mecca of global commerce at 545 miles per hour, taking thousands of innocent lives and shutting down an entire city with a single desperate act. It was brilliant in its horrific efficiency, a staggering one-two punch of David vs. Goliath proportion, proving once again that the bigger they are the harder they fall. It was a plan so simple a twelve-year-old with a stack of Tom Clancy novels could have devised it, yet the surgical execution of the attack belied the professionalism of trained mercenaries on a mission, zealots with a blood-grudge and nothing left to lose. So many people were lost in so little time; it was a battle that was over before we even knew it had started. It was an insane vision played out with heartless poetic timing, an aerial ballet of death punctuated by a body count, mass destruction, and a scar ripped across our national psyche forever. Crash their planes and watch their towers fall. Scare them where they live and work. Fuck 'em all to hell.

Unlike many who live in America I have never carried the illusion that we are safe. Living on the shores of the last global superpower may have seemed comforting to some, but in reality our nation makes more enemies than any other. This isn't necessarily because we're bad people, but we are a smug and ignorant people, wantonly consuming resources as fast as our unregulated corporate entities can package and sell them to us. We have been sold on a lifestyle that makes us carelessly optimistic and blind to global hardships, our eyes always trained on the next video game machine, the biggest SUV, or the latest cool feature we can pack into our wireless luxuries. In the wake of September 11th these things somehow don't seem so important anymore, but then again we've been radically forced to re-evaluate our priorities lately.

In the past we have not looked twice at the cost of our consumption, the cost on a global scale, or at the resources we

Digital collage by Darin Stumme



strip from our neighbors as we strive to make our happy people happier and our wealthy people wealthier. We are a nation that is used to getting what we want at whatever the cost, and we use every facet of our economic and military influence to trade or embargo or just go to war for it at the prices we demand. We are the fattest, richest, and most spoiled nation on the planet; it's no wonder we're targets and no surprise that people are pissed-off at us. We are allies and protectors to some but bullies to the rest, pushing bickering kids around their sand pits, flying our jet planes overhead and rubbing their noses in our technological superiority. We've plowed over cultures to build our strip malls, polluted ecosystems to make a buck, shipped arms to drug dealers and death squads around the globe to serve our political interests, and turned a blind eye to human suffering whenever our own interests weren't at stake. We have done many good things too, our humanitarian record is definitely worth boasting, but we poke our fingers into the politics, war, and commerce of just about every nation around the globe, believing it's our right to influence foreign countries and markets to our own advantage, always seeking to exploit resources and turn a profit for ourselves. The meme of American globalization is effectively built into our economic system like a 21st century Manifest Destiny of free commerce. We don't even perceive it as imperialism, but that's what it is.

Economic imperialists, that's what we are, and you can't fight an economic imperialist with conventional means because the military resources of an economic empire are too vast. The only way to fight an economic imperialist is to strike at the heart of its economic institutions, picking it apart piece by piece, decimating its technology and destabilizing its markets from the inside out. You chip a piece away here, take a bite out there, limit their travel, their communications, their freedoms, turn them against themselves... It can happen here, don't fool yourself.

In the wake of September 11th the US has been thrown violently into damage control mode, possibly the first step in a larger plan bent on toppling it over all together. If the attacks continue we will soon see a security state, then martial law, then an intensified fear of an unseen enemy, an enemy that can penetrate our borders and strike in any form at any time. The US could be forced into a garrison state, feeding on the rage and paranoia of its own citizenry, locking away suspect after suspect, tapping wires and slapping on the cuffs wherever internal threats are perceived. In a terror state citizens become locked down and scared to assemble in large numbers lest they become targets. The Oscars will be cancelled due to bomb threats. Our SUVs will be hidden shamefully in garages, abandoned and dumped into lakes lest someone attempt to blame us for being part of the problem, part of the blissful masses who just did what they were told and bought the gas-guzzling cars, rooted for the guys who stormed into the desert dropping bombs and blowing over buildings as they went. Because, if I understand it correctly, people need to be free, markets need to be free, and we *deserve* gasoline at under $2.00 a gallon because we are *Americans,* damn it. It's our God given right to consume as much as we please, so bomb whomever you need to and just get the job done.

And so we sit in shock and wonder why it happened, how someone could be so heartlessly cruel and shatter so many innocent lives. How could someone hate America so much, just because we give our money, tanks, bombs, planes, missiles, and land mines to their sworn enemies? Do they hate us because we can declare war on whomever we want or kill thousands by embargoing medicine and clean water to an entire country without having to answer to anyone? Do they hate us because we are beautiful, because our flesh is not pocked and scarred by the horrors of war like theirs, because our children are never hungry or freezing or frightened of crossfire like theirs, because our streets are never littered with burnt cars, bomb fallout, and the bodies of our dead like theirs? Well they are now, so get used to it. The chaos of 21st century geopolitics is finally playing out on *our* streets, erupting in *our* urban centers and shedding blood on *our* soil for the viewing pleasure of millions around the globe. We are bleeding like a stuck pig and the hungry world is watching so you better believe it's on. Open season has been declared on the American regime, and now that we're reeling, every fringe guerilla, neo-nazi and psycho-wannabe-with-a-beef will want a piece of the Big Guy, because who else can they blame for their problems? America is the last superpower after all, and now we've been baited, someone's come a gunnin' for *us!* How's that for a switcheroo?

So now it's up to Bush Jr. and he's comin' out swinging, saying we're at war against *evil itself.* When leaders talk like that you can count on one hell of a ride from here on out. We'll strike them; they'll retaliate against us in some mysterious way.

We'll up the ante with a bold move, then they'll do something horribly unthinkable. They are mobile guerillas that play dirty, they can use chemical weapons, biological weapons, nuclear weapons, cyber attacks, radiological attacks... if they can get their hands on it they'll use it, and we don't even know exactly who *they* might be. It could be anyone, al-Qaida or the homegrown terrorist next door. In either case it is you and me, the American civilians, who are the sitting ducks here, just waiting for the next shoe to drop, the next letter-bomb to arrive, the next mall to explode. Are you ready to enter a holy war and take on the pain of the world? Are you ready to be a hero?

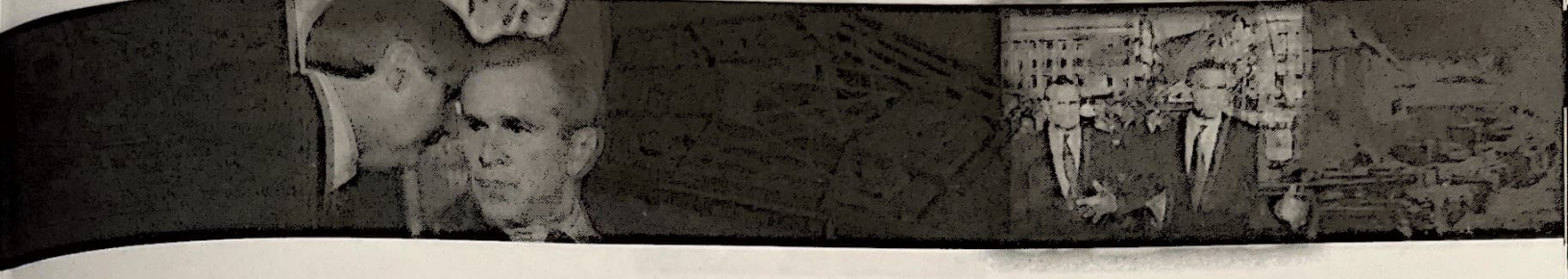
I avoided TV coverage of the tragic 9-11 attacks for a full 24 hours just to let the event sink in; it was the least I could do. I got the tenor of the tragedy from everything else I saw, heard, and did that day, and I didn't need to see replay after replay of New Yorkers running in terror from exploding buildings. It's an image I've been desensitized to again and again in movies like *Godzilla, Independence Day, Armageddon, Deep Impact,* and so many others in the Hollywood blockbuster genre that it has become a hyper-cliché, one that is now seeping into our *real* lives, screaming through our television sets like a bad Bruce Willis movie come to life. But the threat this time is not aliens, mutant monsters, bank robbers, or death from the sky; the villain this time is pure human hatred, vengeance turned ugly on the rich and powerful for no other end but to spread human misery. The buildings are in ruins, thousands are dead, the villains are laughing and rubbing their hands in glee, plotting their next big move while we scurry about to pick up the pieces and try to remember what "normalcy" is like. So when does our James Bondian badass swing into action for slick retribution? Why can't Rambo or Jack Ryan be sent back to Afghanistan to make things right? I'd even settle for Jeff Goldblum and Will Smith at this point, but can anyone save us now? Are we really down to Gee-Dubya to serve up the justice on this one? Why doesn't this comfort me at all? What has this country come to?

Now I've heard the conspiracy theorists going into action already, some saying that this attack was in some way planned or allowed to happen by our own security forces so that they might gain some kind of upper hand in the wake of terror, that bin Laden is just a puppet in some bigger scam, that the CIA and opium might have something to do with it. But I don't necessarily believe any of that, even though I have none of the facts first-hand so I cannot verify or rule anything out no matter how odd or counterintuitive it may seem. Conspiracy or no, there is obviously a huge back-end to this tragedy for politicians and pundits ready to step up to the challenge and strike while the iron is hot. Our personal freedoms are already being quietly eroded in the name of the War on Terror, the only question is how far will it go? From a historical perspective it is only a stone's throw from "Security State" to totalitarianism, a state where uniformed storm troopers are stationed in every corner of our lives to demonstrate how protected our "freedoms" are.

But who can blame them? In times of crisis the establishment will instinctively demand more power and seize more control wherever they can, they can't help it. And no matter how horrible they'll wring as much political leverage from this opportunity as they can. Now that we have a bona-fide "anti-terrorism" issue to debate, political careers will be made and broken on the new so-called security agenda. Those who don't come out strong on the issue will be perceived as anti-patriotic, those who criticize the current administration's policies will be called traitors. These are delicate times and reactionary forces will perceive any form of dissent as dangerous. So how do you find a proper balance between blind patriotism and cautious dissent? Will carpet-bombing villages in Afghanistan really make us safe again? Somehow I don't think so, but I'll just keep that to myself for now.

I hate to sound alarmist, but from the actions of late it seems to me that this trend of non-localized urban micro-warfare is just starting. It is a relatively new invention waged only by those with almost no resources and nothing left to lose, and now it is being waged against us. As more people around the globe face impoverished, forgotten, and disenfranchised lives, more wannabe guerilla politicos will turn to micro-terrorism as their only means to fighting back and destabilizing entrenched global powers just because they're pissed and *they can.* It is a trend that will not end tomorrow or next week or next year; it is just getting started, so prepare for the worst now. We're all in this together and in reality no one is *ever* safe. It is chaos warfare 21st century style now, and the rulebook is being rewritten as we speak. Rule number 1: Don't be a target.

Digital collage by Darin Stumme



On Democracy

by Mark Pesce
September 14th and 15th, 2001

Vengeance is mine, sayeth the lord, I will repay.

The ashen heart of New York City's financial district has become both the indelible symbol and rallying point for a people whose image of invulnerability and superiority were torn from them in the 90 minutes between the strike of American Airlines flight 11 into the north tower of the World Trade Center and its subsequent, catastrophic failure. Even now, some eighty hours later, the rubble continues to smolder, igniting a deeper fire in the American soul. We're drawn to ask some very simple questions: How could this have happened? Where did we fail? How can we prevent such a horror from ever visiting us again? The answers to these questions will determine the tenor of our nation well into the 21st century, so we must be both careful and thoughtful as we search for answers.

Already, the dogs of war are loosed amongst us, and the mass of Americans cry out for justice, for vengeance, for a swift destruction to be delivered upon our enemies, whatever the cost – in money or lives – we must bear in payment. We are at a delicate point, and any decisions we make in the next few days and weeks will quickly reinforce themselves into the unquestionable framework of a public policy we will be forced to live with until some subsequent crisis forces another reexamination of our values.

In the present moment, there is broad talk from the legislative branch of our government that a renegotiation of our freedoms is a necessary down payment for an increased sense of security, that the "open society" which is the distinctive character of the United States will be modified – perhaps radically – in the name of public safety. Already our airports have begun to look like armed camps, and while no one has yet dared object to this injection of the security apparatus into public life, there is a widespread sense that this is just the beachhead for a broader presence of surveillance in our lives. I am not among the paranoid who immediately assume that America will make the transition from "the land of the free" to a prison of citizens who have sacrificed freedom in the name of safety – I'll leave such speculations to Pacifica Radio – but I do believe that the very heart of the issue facing us is the nature and power of democracy, and that any attempt to weaken our democracy, even in the name of security, will necessarily produce a society which is less secure, a vicious cycle which can only end in a kind of culture envisioned by George Orwell in *1984*, or Terry Gilliam in *Brazil*.

On Thursday evening, I spoke with a close friend, who lives in New York City, below 14th Street, the "line of demarcation." After the attacks, this part of the city was cut off, barricaded, and eventually patrolled by New York's National Guard. He reported that he was asked for identification on every block, allowed to travel to his home and no further, and – when he finally managed to leave New York, to stay with family in the suburbs – he was pulled over every ten blocks, interrogated, and released to continue, for another ten blocks. When he finally got past the various checkpoints, which extended into midtown, he found himself automatically pulling over, expecting another interrogation – then found he'd simply overreacted, having come to expect a security presence in an area that was as free as the rest of America. He sighed, put the car in gear, and left Manhattan, realizing that the only sound he'd heard in the previous three days was the constant drone of sirens, day and night, the sonic fabric of life during wartime.

In America, we are free, we are open, we are welcoming. And we have been attacked. But, before the dust settles, it is important to note that we have not been attacked by another free people – nor have we since the War of 1812. History speaks clearly on one point: Americans need only fear nations of people held in the bonds of fascism, authoritarianism, or dictatorship. The events which transpired on the 11th of September can be traced directly to these anti-democratic forms of government.

From what is known – and all of this is still conjecture, and may remain so indefinitely – a Saudi Arabian expatriate named Osama bin Laden is the "mastermind" of the attacks on the World Trade Center. In truth, bin Laden is more like a "venture capitalist" who reviews and selectively funds projects presented to him by various, loosely affiliated terrorist groups. From his stronghold in the mountains of southern Afghanistan – one of the most remote and inaccessible areas on the planet – bin Laden spends his $300 million fortune on "terrorist schools" and funds projects such as the 9/11 attacks. That he can operate freely against the American government is directly due to the ruling elite of Afghanistan, the Taliban, a militant Islamic cult which rose out of the ashes of the civil war which followed the Afghani defeat of the Soviet Union in 1985. The Taliban are an ethnic minority – literally "country bumpkins," much like Khmer Rouge in Cambodia – who used the power vacuum following the collapse of the Soviet war effort (and materials provided by the US government) to wipe out their opposition, installing a theocratic government which makes even the Iranian Islamic fundamentalists seem weak-hearted. Because Osama bin Laden became a "tourist terrorist" in the Afghani war of liberation, funding military and relief efforts — and because he recruited violent malcontents from across the Arab world to fight in Afghanistan – the Taliban regard him as a hero, and have offered him protection as he wages his own war.

It may come as a surprise to many Americans that Osama bin Laden isn't at war with America, except tangentially. His real target is the House of Saud, the ruling family of Saudi Arabia. That nation, so central to American interests and power, has been tightly controlled by a single ruling royal family since it rose to prominence in the 1930's – when vast reserves of oil were discovered beneath its sands. The people of Saudi Arabia aren't particularly fond of their rulers – they yearn for a democracy – but the Sauds, backed by American military forces, have been able to maintain a tightfisted autocracy for almost a century. Osama bin Laden's case against America emerges from the single point that America stands between him and his plans to wage jihad to topple the House of Saud, and install an Islamic "democracy" in Saudi Arabia, a move many Saudis would doubtless support – if they weren't cowed into silence by the American troops installed on their soil.

Osama bin Laden's vision of a free Saudi Arabia was one of the goals of Saddam Hussein's "war of liberation" in 1990-91, a military action which first toppled the autocratic leaders of Kuwait, then set its sights on its southern neighbor. If Saddam Hussein had made his way into Saudi Arabia, he might well have been greeted as a liberator – much as Napoleon was as he made his way across Europe, sweeping aristocratic rulers aside in favor of French-dominated democracies. The Americans put a stop to Hussein's plans before they could be completed, so the Saudi people have endured another decade of harsh, autocratic rule. This has not made them friends of America.

Finally, the Taliban and Osama bin Laden have benefited from their association with a friendly dictatorship, that of neighboring Pakistan. General Pervez Musharraf seized control of Pakistan in October 1999, and has since treated Afghanistan as a "client state," acting as a conduit for funds and fuel – both of which have been embargoed by decree of the United Nations. The United States is fully aware of Pakistan's close relationship with both the Taliban and bin Laden, and is now faced with a difficult decision: either the US must strong-arm Pakistan into withdrawing support for their mini-empire next door, or the US must effectively declare war on Pakistan, in order to serve its military goals in Afghanistan.

To bring this all home, Tuesday's attacks are directly due to the actions of three anti-democratic governments: the autocratic Saudi royal family, the theocratic Taliban, and the dictatorship of General Musharraf. If these three pieces had not been in place, it is extremely unlikely that Osama bin Laden could have marshaled the resources and gained the cover he needed to act as the organizing nexus in the terrorist network which perpetrated these attacks.

It's often said that foreign policy makes strange bedfellows, that we must necessarily "deal with the devil" in order to ensure the interests of the United States. It is now time for us to examine this policy closely, not just with an eye to the short-term goals which might be achieved with such a policy, but with a sense of the consequences of the longer-term effects of this policy. If the United States is a beacon of freedom and democracy for people worldwide, is it wise for us to support – in any form – a government

Digital collage by James Kent

which does not honor those principles? Can we preach democratic principles and then cast a blind eye to autocracy, theocracy, and dictatorship? It's often argued that "the right of national determination" keeps us from meddling in the affairs of other states, but, in the circumstance where national determination has been short-circuited by those in power, can we stand idly by?

After Tuesday's events, I believe the answer is no. To allow any state to exist against the will of its people is to open the door to the kind of ferment and zealotry which will only result in the further deterioration of our civilization. Anti-democratic forces, whether friend or foe, are, of themselves, a threat to democracies everywhere.

Unfortunately, this realization — that anti-democratic forces anywhere are always inimical to democratic peoples – comes with an enormous cost to us; in order to make the world safe for democracy, for the right of individuals to freely determine their own fates, we must risk destabilizing the global political sphere. We must prod and sometimes threaten the autocracies, theocracies and dictatorships into an open application of democratic principles, and we must do so quickly. This will not make us any friends with our "client states" in the Middle East, Asia, or Africa, but, if we intend to remain secure in our own homes, we must ensure that people everywhere in the world have the same chance to secure and enjoy the freedoms we ourselves take for granted.

If we choose to ignore the fact that our own support of anti-democratic forces has led us directly to the 9/11 tragedies, we may have no other choice but to commit ourselves to a continuing downward spiral of our own democratic liberties. It may be thought, by some, that this would at least guarantee our safety, but this is a misapprehension of the highest order. As many have pointed out, such a collapse of our own democratic values would mean that the terrorists would have won the ideological battle. Beyond this, we need to keep in mind that our own history of domestic terrorism – from Shay's Rebellion to Oklahoma City – is directly connected to events which are perceived as threats to American democracy. As a battle cry, "Live free or die" resonates deep throughout the American spirit, and many Americans will never willingly surrender the freedoms they feel as their birthright, no matter what the perceived threat. So while the alternative to our free society may hold the promise of relative safety under a relatively benign police state, the reality would look more like civil war, in which all liberties would be sacrificed.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

If America must take the lead in the extension of the democratic principles across the entire planet, in order to ensure its own safety, and to prevent its descent into its own peculiar brand of techno-fascism, with its attendant and constant acts of domestic terrorism, then we must honestly survey the world we have shaped through our own foreign policies in the sixty years following the end of the Second World War. In many ways, our failures begin there: our nation and its leaders were too tired of conflict to challenge Stalin's lowering of the Iron Curtain – despite Churchill's eloquent warnings – and this led to a half-century of a more gentle terrorism, a "Cold War" during which both superpowers functioned in the darkness of the space between democracy and autocracy, exploiting the interstices for local gains. During the Cold War, any government, however dictatorial or autocratic, was judged solely on its "friendliness" to America's strategic interests. Only extremely large countries, such as India, could thumb their nose at the black-or-white chessboard of Realpolitik. The majority of national entities were entirely defined by their foreign policies, through their relation to the superpowers, and for half a century the boundaries of the nation-states remained essentially unchanged, protected by a threat of mutually assured destruction. Because of this policy, three million Cambodians died under Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge; Iran and Iraq sacrificed a generation of youth in a war that yielded nothing but ruin for both; the Americas became a playground for self-styled "generalissimos" who promised support for American interests like so many obedient lapdogs, and received our covert blessings for any act of torture, however heinous, that might maintain their interests.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the power vacuum created in its wake allowed forces that had previously been held in check by the superpowers to operate freely. This

is the age of the New World Order, in which the phrase "balkanization" acquired a genocidal reality in the Balkans, in Equatorial Africa, and throughout the remains of the Soviet Union. Deprived of support from the superpowers, and no longer under any threat to "stay in line or else," the political map which had been frozen for fifty years suddenly erupted with nationalist fervor.

Despite the fact that the United States encouraged democratic trends in Eastern Europe – as the most effective strategy for dismantling the legacy of Soviet control – this policy remained confined to Europe. We continued to support anti-democratic governments across the Americas, in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Before we can move toward a position in which the defense and extension of democratic principles becomes the central point of American foreign policy, we must first admit that the United States has been perhaps the single most important impediment toward the establishment of these principles. We must repent, acknowledge our sins against the peoples of nations who have been held in bounds that we ourselves drew around them, and then apologize in the only meaningful way – by changing our actions.

While many of the democracies of the world may well hail such a welcome change in American attitudes and actions, the client powers who have so far benefited from our laissez-faire attitude toward them will become angry as we threaten the foundations of their power. As this list includes nearly all of the oil-producing states of the Middle East, it's also a dangerous tactic, both politically and economically. Yet we must come about and stay true to a new course, despite what tempests might greet us along our journey. Our country is wealthy, powerful, and exceptionally resourceful; we can weather any storm tossed up as we help the world transition toward a network of global democracies, each fully invested in the ideal that each human being is the vital center of culture, and the reason that governments are instituted among us.

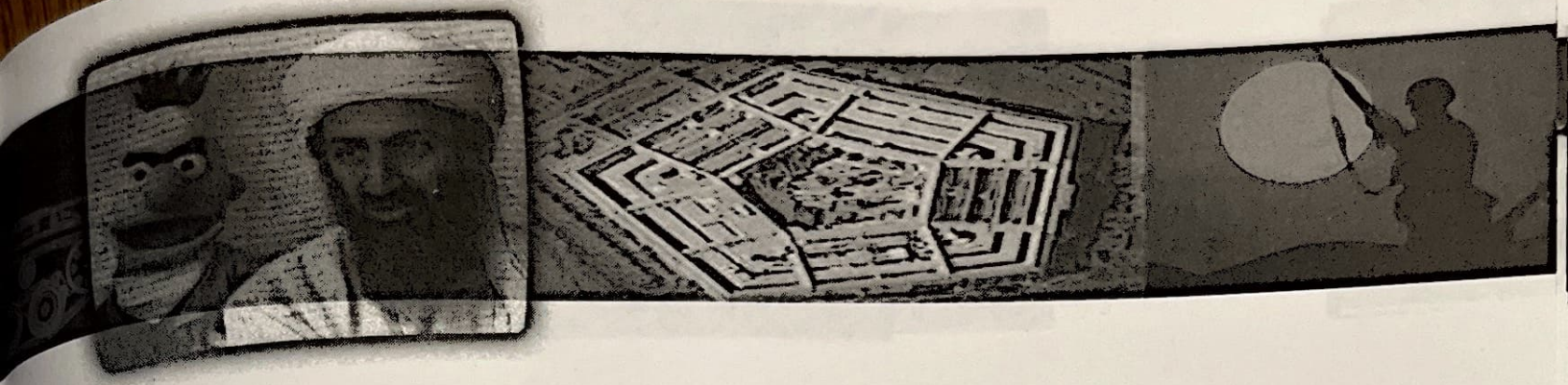
Some will no doubt insist that this proposal is unrealistic, idealistic, perhaps even utopian. But no one has ever said that democracy is a utopian form of government, only that it is preferable to any of its alternatives. Democracy is messy, sometimes corrupt, often disruptive, capable of being swayed by jingoistic leaders with less-than-noble intensions. Unlike pregnancy, democracy is not an all-or-nothing condition; every democratic nation can find faults within its own politics, and, as unpleasant as they may be, ruthless self-examination and criticism are the prerequisites for a healthy democracy.

That point brings us back to current events. In the last week we've seen Senators call for a ban on encryption technologies that have no "back door" for governmental access; the Federal Bureau of Investigation has requested unprecedented powers to listen in on all forms of electronic communication. Given the climate of fear that the 9/11 attacks have produced in America, we seem ready to surrender any form of privacy in the name of security and patriotism. But rights, once surrendered, are only won back through long, often bloody, struggles. And such measures would point us in the wrong direction, away from the openness of discussion, debate, and freedom of thought (even if that thought is encrypted, and visible only to a few chosen others) that must remain absolutely sacred if democracy is to continue to flourish in the United States. Eventually, when we all calm, we'll realize that we have overreacted to the present situation. That's the nature of a crisis. By then, many of the freedoms we enjoy today could be gone.

The events of the last week, springing as they did from the action of anti-democratic governments – some supported by the United States – conclusively demonstrate that we have only one realistic option: forward into the abyss of openness. The unendurable must be endured. We must commit ourselves to a national transformation; no longer will we be just the shining light of democracy. Instead, we must become the potent catalyst for a world of free human beings, working everywhere and at all times to bestow the blessings of liberty on the planet, for ourselves and our posterity. It will not be easy, but it will bring us a measure of peace.

Mark Pesce is the author of The Playful World: How Technology Is Transforming Our Imagination. *He is a contributing editor for* Trip.

Digital collage by Darin Stumme
"Peace Flag" illustration by Christopher Blosser



Ignore the War

A Personal Declaration of Deep Neutrality

by R. U. Sirius

"Dear god, if there is a god, please help me, if you can help me."
— Ganesh Baba

"An 85 year-old Buddhist monk had been living in a cave since 1939, after spirits of the mountain appeared to him in a dream and asked him to become the mountain's protector. In the course of our conversation, the monk asked me, 'Who is this Chairman Mao you keep mentioning?'" — Bill Porter, from Road To Heaven: Encounters with Chinese Hermits

I feel sort of fortunate that I happen to be studying Taoist texts this fall, for a book I'm writing. When human political affairs become so complex and ugly that an honest, thinking, feeling person might not easily find her way to a solid ethical stance, or might not wish to choose sides, even when his tribe's native land is under attack and/or attacking, one could do worse than seek a still place within from which to contemplate the eternal and ever-chaotic flow.

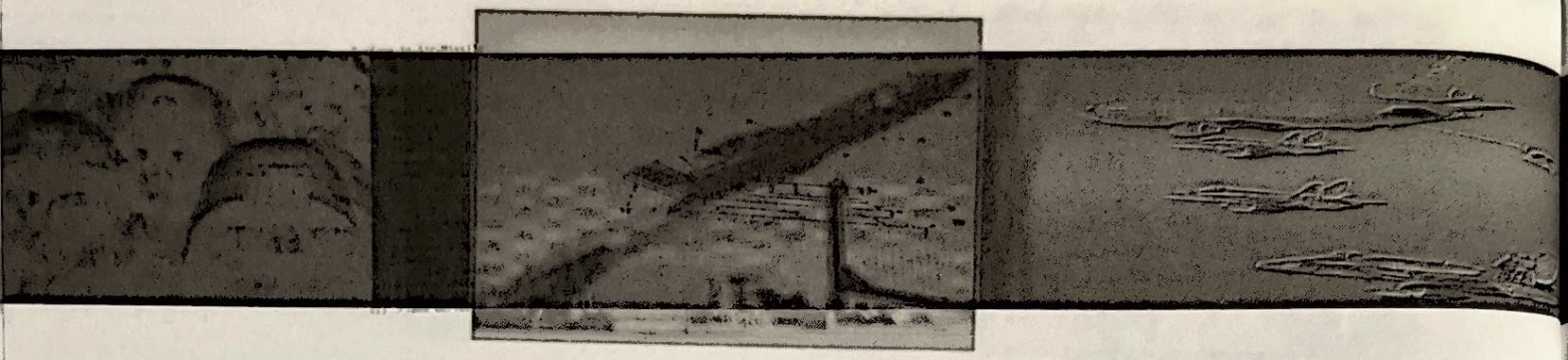
And so, perhaps unduly influenced by ancient Chinese hermits, I declare myself neutral, stuck-in-neutral, neutered even. Hey, this is no time to front — call it what you will.

Don't get me wrong. I prefer our 21st century global capitalism that at least maintains some allegiance to those grand enlightenment themes like choice, democracy, pluralism, separation of church and state, the right to be irreverent or ironic, and the rights of women to sing, speak, laugh, look outside, and wear skimpy clothes; it's all preferable to an ancient philosophy that seeks to dictate absolute conformity to a particular interpretation of a singular religion. I made that choice clear years ago by living in Northern California instead of the Bible Belt.

And we can argue about the causes of this conflict until we're red, white and blue in the face. Some say it's blowback for US militarism and imperial arrogance. Some say bin Laden and his ilk are fundamentalist head cases bent on killing all infidels, and that's a mighty big chunk of humanity. But as the Peppermint Twins wisely advised, "Stop! You're both right!" I subscribe to the critique of US militarism and imperial arrogance, and to the fear of fundamentalists bent on killing all infidels, particularly ones who also happen to believe they go to a real sexy heaven (sexiness on earth being virtually verboten) when they die a martyr. I also subscribe to the claim made by some liberal war supporters that the critique of US arrogance has little immediate relevance to the question of how to contend with the situation at hand. In fact, I have enough "on the one hand" but "on the other hand" thoughts rattling around my brain to make my head spin like Linda Blair in *The Exorcist.* Talking about my deep confusion may be self-indulgent, but I suspect that there are many like me: not ready to hail the war, and not ready to march in protest either.

Yes, I know, in my lifetime (born 1952) the United States of America has committed acts of war – involving launching an invasion, sending in shooting troops, dropping or planting bombs, or assassinating national leaders – in nineteen nations, and has committed violence by proxy in many more. I know that we are the only nation on earth with military bases all over the globe. I know that our military spends more money than the rest of the G7 countries combined and twenty times as much as the eight countries we call "rogue states." And I know that we sell most of the armaments used by most of the conflicting parties engaging in various slaughters the world over. Even if mainstream political analysts can justify most of these actions one at a time, when this information is taken in as a whole, they ought to at least admit that we sure stand out among the nations of the world. Surely this "burden of empire" shtick is a bit much!

In the past, I've railed against the smugness of ordinary Americans who – with minimal attention – stood in quiet



support as our government lobbed the odd occasional bomb into foreign lands with all the casualness of Jenna Jameson giving blow jobs. I warned that smug Americans might some day get their comeuppance.

But I wasn't expecting a sort of Spanish Inquisition!

Paradigm Shock

Indeed, like many dissident Americans who believe(d) that the biggest current political problems were global warming, excess global corporate power, and the police stateist machinations of the war on drugs, I'm dealing with total paradigm shock. These issues continue to be important, and the US Government is not my friend in their regard. But there's no getting around it. The forces that are almost certainly behind the 9/11 brutality have expressed some serious interest in spreading a demented fascist fundamentalist rule as far and wide as possible, by any means necessary. Many among us have mocked those who've perceived this sort of threat in the past as victims of an unseemly paranoia that attacks only unenlightened control freaks. But those bin Laden speeches and interviews and TV broadcasts are real. You didn't hallucinate this one, acid boy. This guy has declared war on every American, Jew, Pagan and *infidel!* That's everybody who doesn't agree with him — as big a portion of the human population as the non-Aryans our German buddies wanted to off or enslave back in the day. Of course, when I heard this quote from Mr. Laden a few years ago, it seemed abstract. Now there's a fucking hole in the middle of New York City. This ain't just some Jasper coming down off a three day speed binge, deciding he should rule the world, and then taking his frustrations with his powerlessness out on his wife and kids. These guys are serious, tactically adept, and reasonably well-equipped. They are clearly equally happy to kill pacifists, corporate executives, soccer moms, goths, anti-globalization activists, skinheads, Sally Fields, dogs, cats, Arab Americans, and firemen.

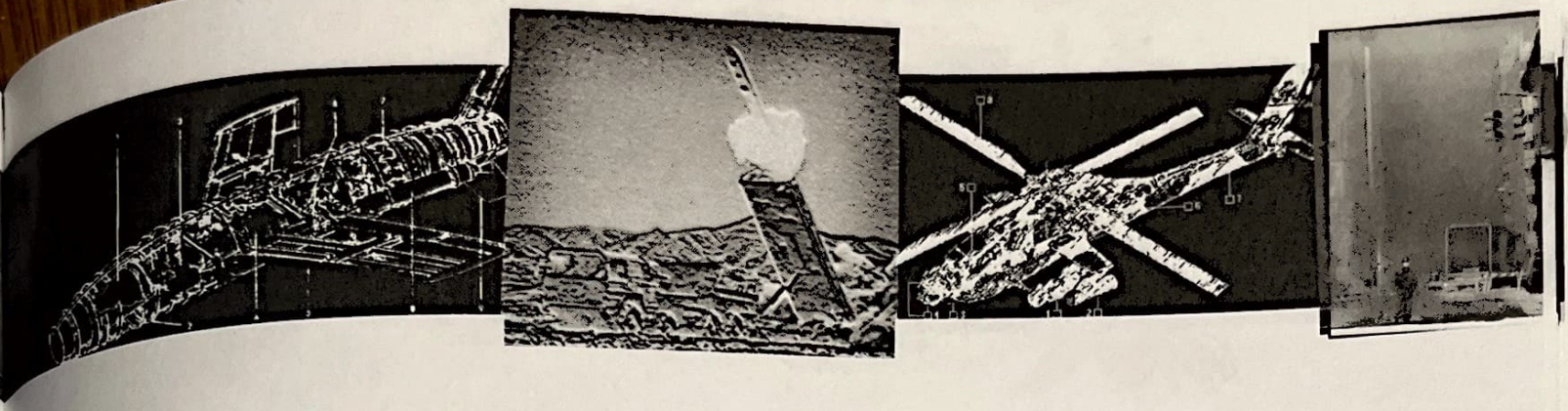
There are those who will still insist that the *main* motivation of these terrorist fighters is their frustration with US military presence and aggressiveness in the Islamic region, compounded by US financial and political support for Israel, and Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. According to this view, if we bring our imperial troops and dollars back home, they'll leave us alone. Maybe. Wanna bet?

Consider this: Hitler's Nazis were at least partly the product of the cruel treatment imposed on Germany by the imperial, arrogant powers that defeated them in World War I. He had some legitimate gripes. Also, as with bin Laden and his ilk now, many wise Western thinkers understood how our business-as-usual created and supported Hitler. We had some major responsibility there. But when push came to shove, Hitler still had to be stopped.

Now, consider the rule of the Taliban. Homosexuality is a capital offense. Television and video technologies are confiscated and burned. (Eat your heart out, Jerry Mander!) Women are punished for showing any skin, even by accident. Photographs and drawings of people or animals are banned. Clapping is forbidden. Non-religious music is illegal. Unwed couples who have sex are whipped. (Of course, this also happens frequently in San Francisco, but that's consensual.) No doubt, US ally Saudi Arabia imposes similarly weird restraints based on the same interpretation of Islamic law. Indeed, we can find enough contradictions, counter-examples, and Byzantine Western double-dealings in this situation to make our heads spin like Linda Blair again and maybe even puke green.

Still, the bottom line is that the terrorist cells being clumsily pursued by American and British bombs and troops hate US Imperialism and they hate fun. I'd throw over the imperialism but I'll insist on keeping whatever fun we can still manage to afford. We've arrived at a peculiar point in history where we might be seeing a war between the haves and the have-nots, in which the haves more or less believe in humanist values (massive contradictions,

Digital collage by Darin Stumme



hypocrisies, and colonial advantages duly noted) and the have-nots don't. Stalinism and Maoism prefigured all this, but it emerges into a horrible clarity with the rise of religious fundamentalisms among the have-nots. It's a great time to be neutral!

I used to subscribe to the materialist interpretation of human conflict — that beneath the ideologies, you find competition for resources and territory. I was a jerk. When people are fanatical about their belief in a religion or ideology, they'll even act against their own material interests. This is "idealism," in point of fact, standing in contrast to greedy self-interest. (Hold the phone, Ayn Rand. I'm not joining your rallies either, and I don't feel like unpacking this one right now.) This is why idealism can be so much more dangerous than corrupt power seeking. Idealism can't be paid off. And when an idealism wants to force everybody to share its ideal, it can be implacable.

Trust No One

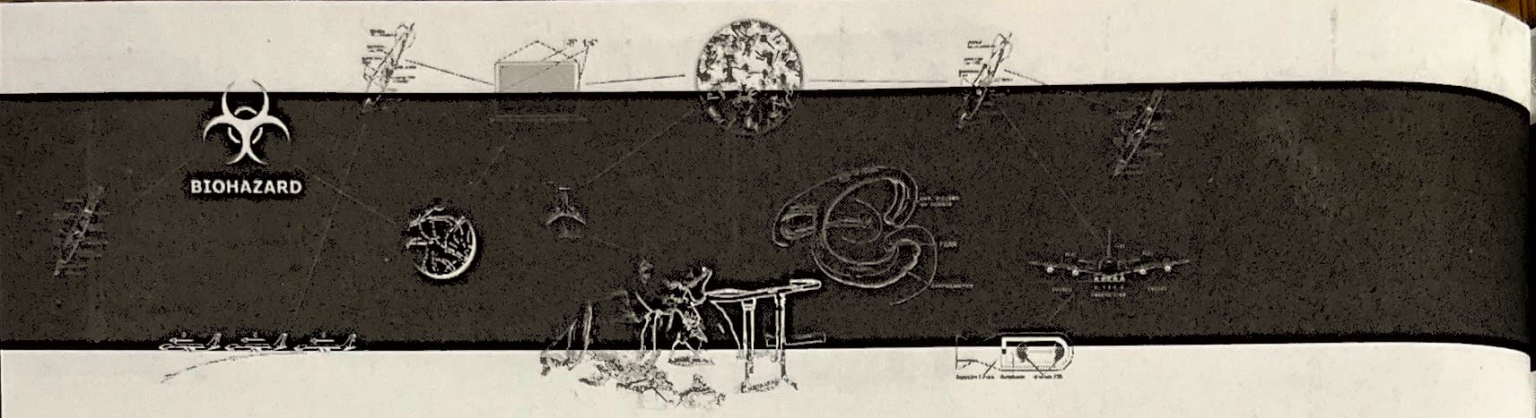
You may well ask, since I believe the Islamic warrior cells are probably the biggest threat to life and liberty since the German Nazis, why am I neutral? Why don't I support the war?

Well, because I don't trust the Bush administration to do this in the most humane way possible, and because it might be a really stupid move. I don't trust the Bushies to make the right tactical decisions. In World War II, the allies visited terror on the civilian populations of Dresden, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. Whether these horrific actions were necessary to bring the war to an end is still debated today, but at least the war did come to an end. There was a nation state on the receiving end that could be brought to surrender. This is different. It isn't really a war. It's a situation. And it's a situation where the wrong tactics would be a disaster, both ethically and in terms of our security. Bombs always seemed to me a blunt instrument for military actions that pretend to "surgical precision." So I assert my democratic right to question the tactics of the Commander-in-Chief, and I assert my existential right to declare my total uncertainty about what the right tactics are at this moment. If I were President I wouldn't have that luxury, but I'm not, so I do. You too.

Beyond these tactical considerations, I don't trust the Bushies' motivations. I don't trust them to act in the best interests of humanity and America, never mind a dissident weirdo like me. Already, the attack on what's left of our civil liberties (http://www.aclu.org/action/usa107.html) is under way. And the Pentagon is ripping us off for more money.

(Parenthetical rant: Do you mean to tell me that $300 billion or so a year in military expenditures is not enough money to go after an enemy consisting of a few tens of thousands of stateless desert dwellers supported by one guy worth less than Bill Gates' dream home, plus whatever riches come from being on the shit end — poppy growing — of the heroin trade? We spend more on defense than the next five nations combined, but we can't use what we already have to go after an enemy the relative size of a mosquito? After telling us for twenty years that common folks can't "throw money" at problems, like not being able to pay rent or doctor's bills, we're suddenly going to be made safe by giving the Pentagon and our failing intelligence agencies more money?)

If history is any indicator, surely some time in the future, if we're lucky enough to get there, we will confront evidence of Bushie neglect for our safety and freedom in this "war." Just like the victims of Gulf War Syndrome or the people in the Washington subway system who were the unwitting tests of an early bio-war experiment (http://csf.colorado.edu/mail/psn/jan98/0027.html) by our own military, we will get yet another opportunity to understand that whatever actions our government might take, it's never about protecting us.



Thou Doth Protest Too Much

Okay. So since I'm saying, "bombs are a blunt instrument," why not join the anti-war protests? Well, at the risk of being obvious, somebody did just blow a fucking hole in New York City, and it is apparently the same bunch that had declared war on us. This is some serious shit. This one is different, and it behooves dissidents not to be predictable and reactive. Also, I have to admit the possibility that the Bushies might be choosing the best alternative in a Hobson's choice. I have to consider that nothing short of shutting down the Taliban regime in Afghanistan can begin to root out a genuine threat, and that nothing short of bombs can defeat the Taliban. Additionally, I have to admit that there's a pretty good chance that the Afghan people — particularly the women — will be better off if we defeat the Taliban with few civilian casualties. It would be difficult for the Afghanis to do much worse than the extended rule of the Taliban.

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Ironically, the role model here might be our old enemies, the Vietnamese, who finally invaded Cambodia to get rid of Pol Pot, whose horror show was spilling over into neighboring countries.

A Rally For the Perplexed

So here am I; neutral, stuck-in-neutral, neutered, not even stuck in the middle with Bill and Al, but trapped in right field with Dubya and Herr Ashcroft busy making plans for his own version of the Spanish Inquisition, unable to join the antiwar protests with a clear conscience because they could be wrong, not able to fly the flag because I don't believe in nationalism, not able to endorse the "war" because it could be a dumb tactic leading to pointless deaths, unwilling to sacrifice my irony and foolish irreverence to the martial mood of the country or to a bizarre and pious import from the 13th century.

Do you feel like I do?

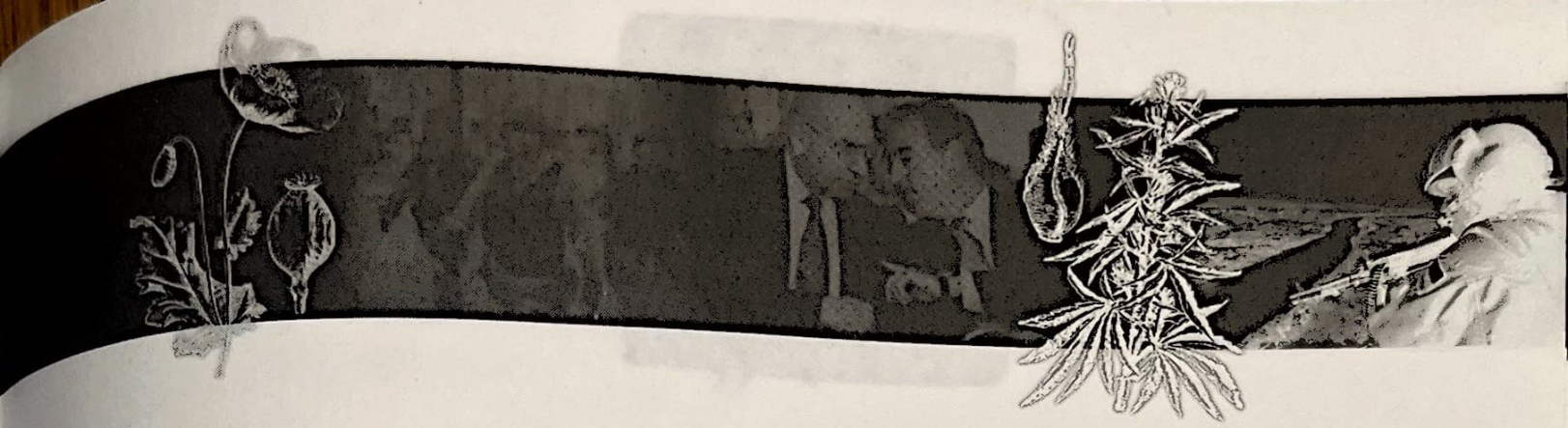
Perhaps we neutrals should join together. We can hold public cry-ins. We can carry picket signs that say "Not sure," "Utterly confused," and "It's just sad." Maybe not.

Maybe it's time to turn on, tune out, and drop way down deep inside ourselves, quietly, solemnly, into a private search for meaning. After all, if it's all downhill from here — if we're all going down slow, it would be a lot more dignified to go down in a meditation posture, or clutching a Beckett play, than bellowing "USA! USA! USA!" like some WWF ape. I mean, many Americans responded to the situation by purchasing guns. They're gonna shoot 'em down some anthrax! Well, everybody has to find his or her comfort level, I guess.

Not-knowing is true knowledge.
Presuming to know is a disease.
First realize that you are sick.
Then you can move toward health
— Lao Tzu

R.U. Sirius is the author of The Revolution: Quotations from Revolution Party Chairman R.U. Sirius. *He was one of the founders of* Mondo 2000.

Digital collages by TonyB and Darin Stumme



Our Second War

by Alexander T. Shulgin
September 19, 2001

The military leaders of the United States have, since the end of World War II, asked for and received a budget that would allow them to fight two wars at the same time. The annual budgetary assignment of a few hundreds of billions of dollars to create new weapons and anti-weapons is an automatically approved action of Congress. It is pretty much our highest priority.

But there has been a gradual change in the definition of war over the last few decades. In the long struggle in Viet Nam, our amassing of vulnerable ground personnel to face the Vietnamese troops gradually gave way to the increased use of air power, rocketry and chemical weapons. And although we lost that war, our military planning has leaned more and more towards strategic bombing and guided missiles. Maximum power output with a minimum of personal risk. The Gulf War depended heavily upon this aerial force and the troops that were there were withdrawn in a few days. In Kosovo, virtually everything was done from the air. With this form of depersonalization, there evolved a different concept of what war really is, and who the enemy really is and, even more important, what would constitute victory.

The recent tragic terrorism in New York and Washington has led to our most recent hearing of the declaration of war. The premeditated act of murdering thousands of innocent people is certainly a criminal act, and perpetrators deserve to be tried in a public court. The damage and the losses from this disastrous act may never be satisfactorily tallied. This was the action of a group of individuals, currently unidentified but possibly eventually nameable, against our society. It would be inaccurate to call it an act of war. But we chose to declare war, to mobilize our reserves, to start troop movements, to put the military on high alert, to ask for (and get) additional tens of billions of dollars from Congress, all within the first week of the tragedy. There is no country, yet, to which the blame can be assigned. The enemy can only be described conceptually. It is a war against terrorism. And it will be fought with whatever energy and time is needed to achieve victory. I trust that "victory" will be the guarantee that: "There shall never again be an act of terrorism in the United States." Does anyone really believe that this is possible? I do not.

This can be seen as the second war. The first is still underway, and it is in every way the equal of the first, in the sense of the enemy being a concept rather than a country, and the definition of "victory" is every bit as vacuous and unobtainable. This is the war on drugs which has been underway for quite a few years, and is continuously growing in size and cost. It is involving more and more of the military, from aircraft in Colombia to surveillance by Naval submarines. We are also resolved in this war to do what is necessary to achieve victory. Is victory defined here, also, as: "There shall never again be an illegal drug used in the United States?" Again I do not believe that this is possible.

But the government has achieved the goal that it sought: a demonstration that it can fight two wars at once. And the fact that neither one is winnable will guarantee that they will proceed for a long, long time. The extremely sad corollary is that each of them will justify the erosion of more and more of out personal liberties and freedoms, to make these ephemeral "victories" more easily achieved. I am afraid that it is an inescapable path to a "police state," governed by an authority structure that will be completely intolerant of any unapproved behavior.

Alexander Shulgin is the co-author of PIHKAL: Phenethylamines I Have Known And Loved *and* TIHKAL: Tryptamines I Have Known And Loved.

Uncanny TV

by Erik Davis
September 12, 2001

So I sat there in front of the television Tuesday morning, with a whimpering woman by my side and the old tribal programs of vengeance and lament booting up in my breast, watching the '70s disaster flicks of my youth remade in hardcore, 21 C stylee. The now familiar scenes of the United jet slicing into the upper stories of the south tower, soon to collapse to its knees like a dispirited giant, were unnerving enough. More to the point, they were unbelievable and so, as many would say that day, "surreal" — our word for that reality we are programmed to disavow even as it swamps us like a dream tsunami.

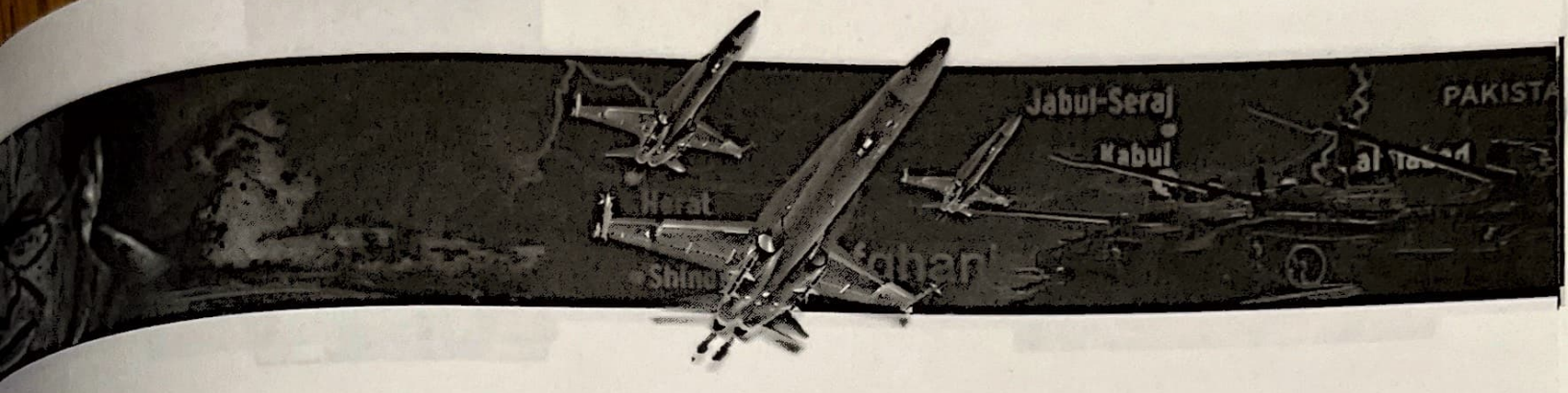
That morning I also saw some genuinely uncanny media: a few short seconds of live broadcast that rank as some of the most disturbing moments of TV I've had the mixed blessings to see. A blond female reporter was standing on the trashed streets of southern Manhattan, narrating her horrifying and, for a journalist, exhilarating morning. (Forgive me if I recall neither the network nor the name of the journalist, but the TV became a babelbox that morning, a slice and dice machine of affect, image, and information.) The woman, who was only moderately in control of herself, was clutching a piece of paper in her hand. After finishing her brief tale she asked the cameraman if he could close in on the item, which, she said, resembled much of the debris about her.

The pink paper was some sort of invoice, and its entire edge was burned like some ancient map. As the camera zoomed in, nearly filling the screen with the document, the woman pointed at the address in the upper-left hand corner, which read: One World Trade Center. But as she read "One World Trade Center," some electromagnetic djinn decided to fuck with the feed, for what I then saw and heard was an eerie one-second loop of voice and image: "— World Trade Center — World Trade Center — World Trade Center," over and over a half dozen times, her staccato finger jabbing at the address like a robot on the fritz. For a moment the TV became a portal into some mad domain of media. And then the invisible studio editors sweating over their live decks switched away from this abysmal mantra to another, more familiar feed.

For a few strange moments, the news stream so many were feeding off of that day erupted with information's terror: noise. The transmission snafu reminded me that explosions do not just happen in the material universe of airplanes and stock brokers; info-bombs also rupture the noosphere, dividing, confusing, and destroying minds, our minds, even as the machines that network those minds — the telephones, the web servers, the satellites — groan under the weight of our sudden compulsive need to tune it, to talk, to witness. Our helpless but strangely reassuring envelopment in a frantic media storm was, of course, part of the spectacular plan, admirably orchestrated by these terrorist DeMilles and utterly unavoidable. With our eyeballs glued to the tube, our symbolic landscapes ruptured, we were got good. But for a few seconds, even that symbolic turbulence was disrupted by the tape loop, filling my throat with the Real. The glitch was abstract, an artifact of data transmission, and yet it radiated like shrapnel through the Möbius strip of media. This is the trauma that changed everything, and us, in the blink of an eye.

Erik Davis is a contributing editor for Trip.

Digital collage by James Kent



While There Is Still Time

by Paco Xander Nathan
September 12, 2001

I am struck by the outpouring of grief within America, how we feel terror when confronted with a nameless, random violence from the outside.

So much is being reported in American media right now: a need to track down and punish those responsible for the attacks; a need for more allocation to federal defense and security budgets; the unfortunate closing of Disneyland, Disneyworld, and national baseball games; the potential rise of oil prices; the affirmation that the American military is prepared and ready...

So much of what existed on those same wires earlier in the morning yesterday is now buried: an attempted assassination of the Afghani president; Israeli tanks rolling into Palestine; American officials admitting they were warned three weeks in advance to back off support of aforementioned Israeli tanks; declassified 1970 documents showing that Nixon, Helms, and Kissinger authorized US$10 million for an assassination of the Chilean president (which eventually led to founding the WTO, by the way), etc.

Often I wonder about whether if I'd been forced into a central European ghetto during the 1940s, would I have fought back against storm troopers? How is that situation in any conceivable way different from the daily life of an Arabic teenager growing up in Beirut or the West Bank?

Here is another vital piece of that same media mosaic; I urge everyone to allocate a few moments out of CNN viewing budgets to consider this simple photo album: http://hosting.menanet.net/~hab/hab/Gallary/Sabra/sabra82.htm

In 1982, the Israeli army conducted mass genocide against the men, women, and children confined in the death camps at Sabra and Shatila. How many years would it take one of us to witness *that* terrorism and genocide, seeing our relatives murdered daily in a fascist holocaust — aided by a foreign country where its citizens won't even acknowledge their support of the warfare — before we took action?

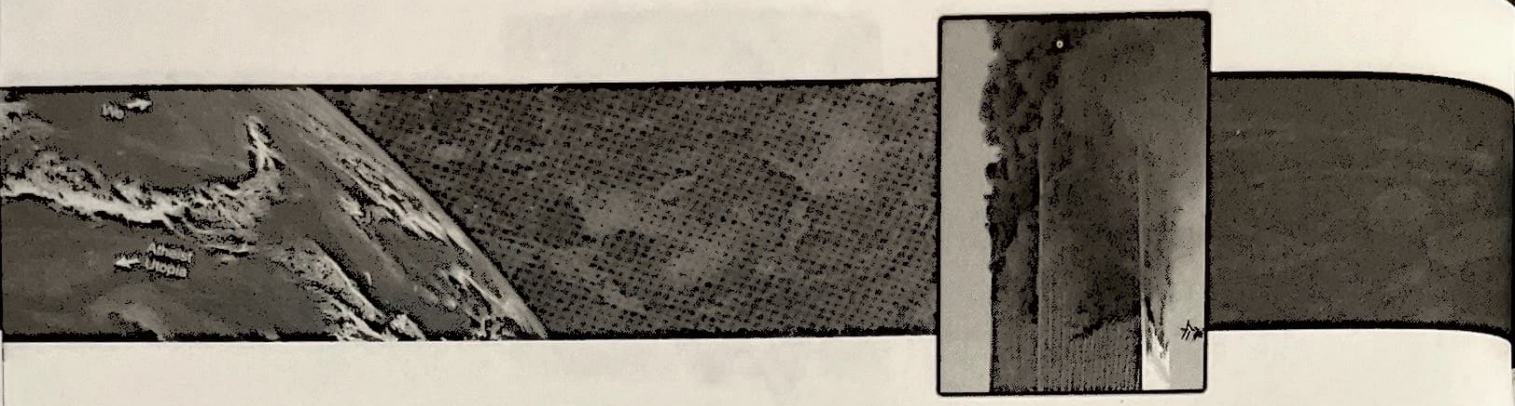
I detest the loss of civilian life, yet cannot help but recognize that America deserved what it got and much much more. Our loss of thousands in NYC does not even begin to compare with the loss of hundreds of thousands of civilian lives in the Mideast as a direct result of US policies, funding, weapons, and even direct actions. Moreover, it becomes painfully obvious that we are confronting warfare with a highly sophisticated civilization, one with legitimate grievances against us, one that quite obviously had the opportunity to kill many hundreds of thousands of American civilians, but instead chose to do a structure hit against our corporate base with a relative minimum loss of life. Who, when working for the corporate military-industrial complex — whether we're talking about the Pentagon-styled physical warfare, or the WTC-styled economic warfare — is actually innocent in this conflict?

So far, my opinion — in 1982 and now over the past day — has cost me several close friendships. It will likely cost several more here now. However, I cannot live with the thought of being an American, with the reality that any support of Israel is utterly amoral... not without at least taking a moment to acknowledge that I cannot and will not support the kind of blind mindlessness sweeping across the industrialized world.

Someone who feels patriotic either to America or Israel may hate me for saying this, they may stop reading this magazine, they may take violent action against me and my loved ones in acts of anti-Middle-Eastern racism, but they will eventually have to confront the reality of how America takes advantage of the rest of the world.

If either Pearl Harbor or the Oklahoma City bombing incidents were any indication, then a substantial curtailment of civil liberties will follow. One must give this counterpoint a voice, while there is still time.

Paco Xander Nathan is the founder of the Ceteri Institute for the Study of Corporate Metabolism, and was co-founder of Fringeware Review. *He is a contributing editor for* Trip.



Global Being

by Earth Erowid
October 28, 2001

Interdependence. The human species predominantly evolved in an environment where travel was slow, communication highly localized, and almost no one ever left the continent on which they were born. We humans are no longer creatures living in that environment.

From one perspective, the attacks on the World Trade Center could be seen as a type of self-regulation mechanism of the Global Being. The attacks remind us that we are no longer isolated from each other. As we settle into the age of global travel, global media, global digital communication, and ever cheaper & smaller weaponry, humans continue to shift from creatures with localized focus to creatures whose daily lives, health, and families are more directly affected by the actions of every other component of the Global Being.

Douglas Adams's characterization of our planet — as one in a line of ever-more powerful computers designed to calculate the Meaning of Life — is one of the images that sometimes melds, in my thinking, with the Gaian hypothesis or the concept of a Global Brain. The interconnectedness and levels of organization and meta-organization between planet, creature, collective action, and human technology begin to look a lot like a single entity, a collective lifeform.

Terrorism can be seen as a normal (if locally self-destructive) part of this collective being's systems of self regulation. As in any body, made up of many parts, individual cells may act destructively, cancers form, cells die, or some actively self destruct. But we recent humans are a new breed of unit in the Global Being with the creative impulse and individual power to kill on a grand scale, often anonymously. As designer viruses and similarly lethal tools become affordable for any organization with a diversified fiscal portfolio, we are very directly at the mercy of our fellow cells anywhere in the Being. Disparities anywhere become energy potentials that affect all of us.

As global integration and interdependence continue to increase, we are served far more by cooperation and shared interests than we can be in hoping that rigorous authority can seek out and destroy the individual cells which seek to destabilize that authority.

The future health of our collective being rests on the hope that we are creative enough to build new ways of being together which empower an ever-higher proportion of cells to share in our collective health. It is a direct challenge of our time to design systems which enfranchise diversity and idiosyncrasy in a way that rewards constructive action for change far more than it rewards destructive acts.

As long as war, violence, and terrorism are functional and efficient tools for affecting change or expressing dissatisfaction, they will be part of the Global Being's repertoire for managing disparities and dissent.

I see hope in the stunning achievements of other lifeforms to adapt systems of cooperative interdependence. For humans in this time it is an inescapable systemic imperative: either we adapt constructively or adapt destructively, but either way we adapt.

Earth Erowid is co-founder of The Vaults of Erowid (http://www.erowid.org). He is a contributing editor for Trip.

Digital collage by Darin Stumme
New York disaster photographs by Gilad Rosner

Shellshocked

by Abrupt
September 13, 2001

I've called most of my friends in New York and so far everyone is accounted for. Family members knew people who were killed.

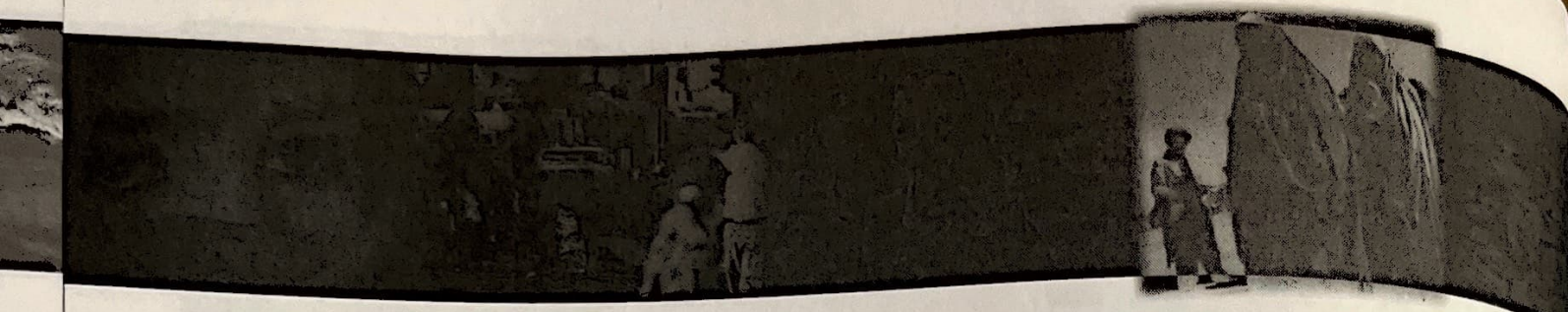
We're all kind of shellshocked, like waking up fine in the morning and having your arm amputated by noon. It definitely hits closer to us who have lived there. I feel as if a deep anchor in my subconscious has been cut loose, and it comes at a time when I am feeling a lack of grounding in my own life. It is hard to tell how much these feelings are part of our collective human and American experience right now, and what is tangled up in my own personal story.

Compounding this confusion is my own inherent mistrust of media images, and the statements issued by our government through the media. I have always been critical of taking "coverage" at face value — a stance which was highlighted watching the Branch Davidian compound in Waco burn. Yet in the middle of all this is the incontrovertible fact of the twin towers collapsing. This was a landmark I saw on my way to work every day for years. I've been on the top, on the bottom, in the Windows on the World restaurant. To watch planes smashing into it precludes any efforts at simulation, interpretation or spin. There is no room to second-guess these images, unless a hoax of such magnitude has been perpetrated that it would probably take more resources than the act itself. I see footage of dark-skinned people singing and waving the Palestinian flag and am told they are celebrating the attack on America — but I do not know what is really going on. I see the ultimate icon of America's success crumbling in flames, and there is no need for anyone to interpret this for me. This is the source of the terror — and the success of this terrorist act: that its symbolic force is so direct and so complete.

I have extremely mixed feelings about all of this. The people responsible for this should have their brains slowly scrambled in public, but no human act can compensate for this inhumanity. And yet, I have long been aware that the worldview presented to the American people through our news sources is not the only story. There are people suffering throughout the world as a result of our tax dollars, our civilization and our excess. There is a lot of anger which, though not always well-educated, is not always unjustified. An act of aggression against civilians is unforgiveable — but tell that to a nation who dropped a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima. I understand the anger of many in the Middle East against us, to the extent that I know the facts. The problem is I know so little — as little as most Americans. Combine that with my own skepticism of the CNN version, I find it hard to take a position. I fear we are facing times when this noncomittal stance will become untenable, perhaps even criminal, yet the issues involved are not as clear as any side would have us believe.

Our civilization had fancied itself free from History, but History has reached up and grabbed our leg as we were scrambling for the escape hatch. It is resounding all about us, and will continue to do so for some time yet.

Abrupt wrote about Burning Man for the creativity issue of the MAPS Bulletin.



The Wrath

by Antero Alli
September 12, 2001

I have only been able to endure the loss of one person at a time in my life. This massive loss of life is unfathomable to me; any response is ridiculously beyond words, except to question the effects of such sudden release of so much human energy at the same time and place. This must have an impact in the aetheric domain but what, I don't know yet...

It's important not to jump to conclusions; quick answers can be a knee-jerk reflex of panic (the goal of terrorism). Instead, I am asking myself questions, like: what did this Unified Corporation of 'merica (aka the USA) do to elicit such an organized and religious investment of wrath ?

Those who are not looking within to find some truth may soon be sucked into a scapegoating tsunami. The scapegoating is inevitable; the USA is an immature nation that needs a big goat right now.

I am already perceiving through myself certain collective shadow projections (not my shadow) onto innocent people who somehow match the descriptions of what mass media is painting as "the enemy." If a foreign nation is blamed, God forbid, I think the USA will declare war with immediate retaliation (think nuclear).

Spiritually, the event itself acts as an OUTSIDE SHOCK, coming without warning and leaving us with no real comprehension or control of what has happened. If I am not finding creative ways to respond to this shock, I am finding myself under the influence of its immobilizing numbness, connected not so much to my personal life but to what I perceive as an underlying collective hysteria (with its lowest common denominator of consciousness). How to put this shock to work to serve something greater?

If any higher good is to come of this, I think it will have to emerge as AN ACT OF WILL — the will to relate to this high uncertainty zone AS A CREATIVE STATE to rearrange our lives, our intentions, to serve something greater, more relevant and essential. Many of us, it seems, have been unwittingly lost in lives rendered meaningless and superficial as a result of naive greed, excessive consumerism and its incumbent illusions of entitlement. Simply put, we have become a little crazy from having too much of a good thing, grown too accustomed to getting our way and buried in those ruts of frustration that only prolonged instant gratification trance can bring.

Antero Alli is the author of Angel Tech, All Rites Reversed, *and* The Akashic Record Player.

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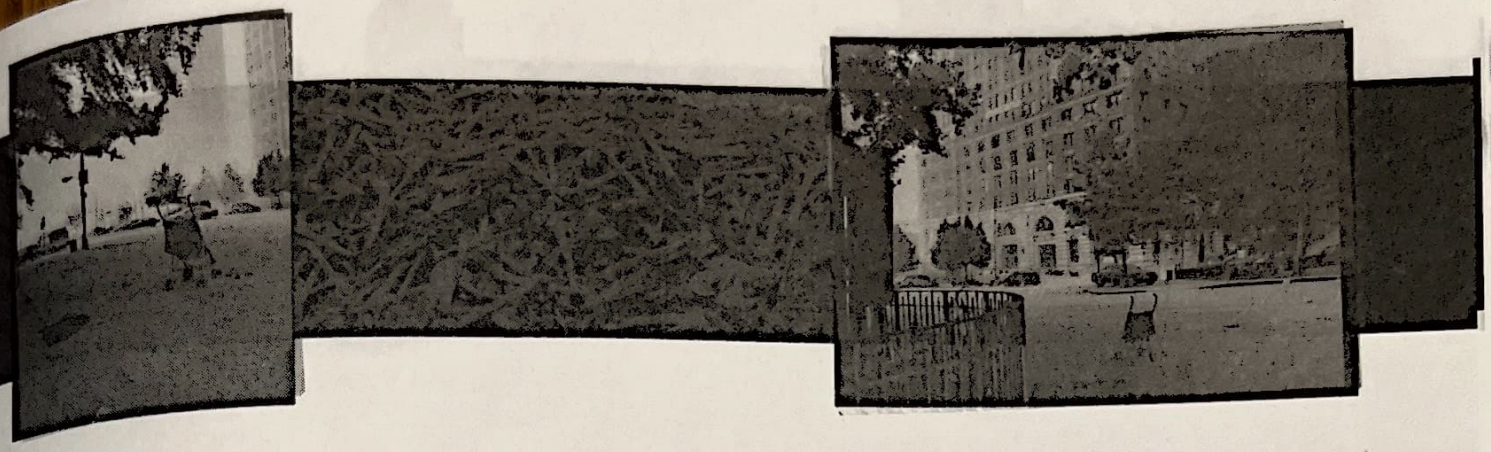

Maybe This Is How Ghosts Are Formed

By Rick Strassman

Hundreds of people have contacted me since January, when my book *DMT: The Spirit Molecule* first appeared. Nearly all of this correspondence relates individuals' own drug experiences, or non-drug states that resemble the DMT intoxication that our volunteers described during their participation in the Albuquerque research. These latter reports generally support the theories I present in the book, that naturally-released DMT may help mediate spontaneous extraordinary mental states, such as near-death and mystical experiences.

However, a handful of letters have questioned or challenged some of my basic assumptions. One of these assumptions is that DMT release before, during, and after death is the way in which the soul's cleaving to the body ends. The thousands of people who died in the plane attacks on September 11 led me to consider again the relevance of this concept.

After these tragedies, a college freshman emailed me a question I had never considered. After apologizing in advance for what might seem to be a gross question, she asked, "What happens when someone's head is blown off, and there's no time for this process to take place?" Stymied, I asked what she thought. She replied: "Maybe this is how ghosts are formed."

I started thinking about those thousands of instantly vaporized casualties of the Japanese atomic bombs. What are the consequences of depriving so many people of the way in which we are "supposed to" die?

The psychedelic experience repeatedly tells us there is consciousness without a body, i.e. after death. Most religious traditions teach us that there is a step-wise progression of consciousness leaving the body and processing its historical residues on its way towards either merging with the Source of Consciousness and/or its next birth. Our DMT research suggests a mechanism for this process.

Now, I can't help but wonder if our methods of instant death are creating conditions for untold numbers of people's consciousness to wander endlessly in some awful intermediary state. What can we do about this?

Rick Strassman is the author of DMT: The Spirit Molecule.

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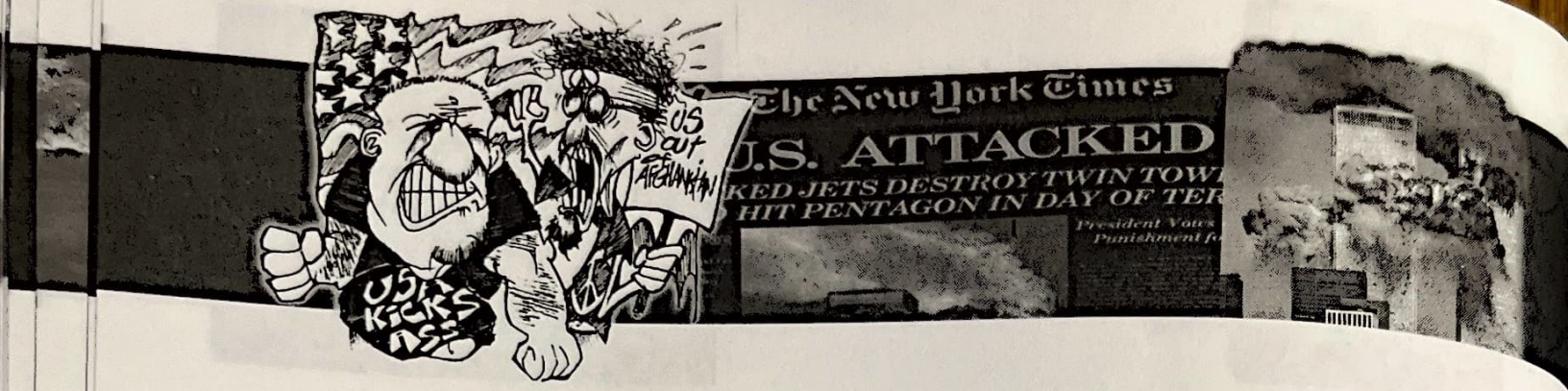


To All Who Are Angry

By Larry Hagerty
September 16, 2001

A few weeks ago I heard Arun Gandhi, co-founder of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence (http://www.gandhiinstitute.org), speak about the importance of recognizing the fact that anger is the ultimate source of violence. In his talk, Dr. Gandhi reminded us of how important it is for us to search for the sources of anger, whether it is anger directed at us or anger coming from within. For me, this advice hasn't come a moment too soon. When the true magnitude of last Tuesday's events began to sink in, I was disturbed to find myself filling with rage... fueled by my anger. As I began to examine my anger and search for its source, I was unsettled by what I found. Here are a few of the reasons I am angry today:

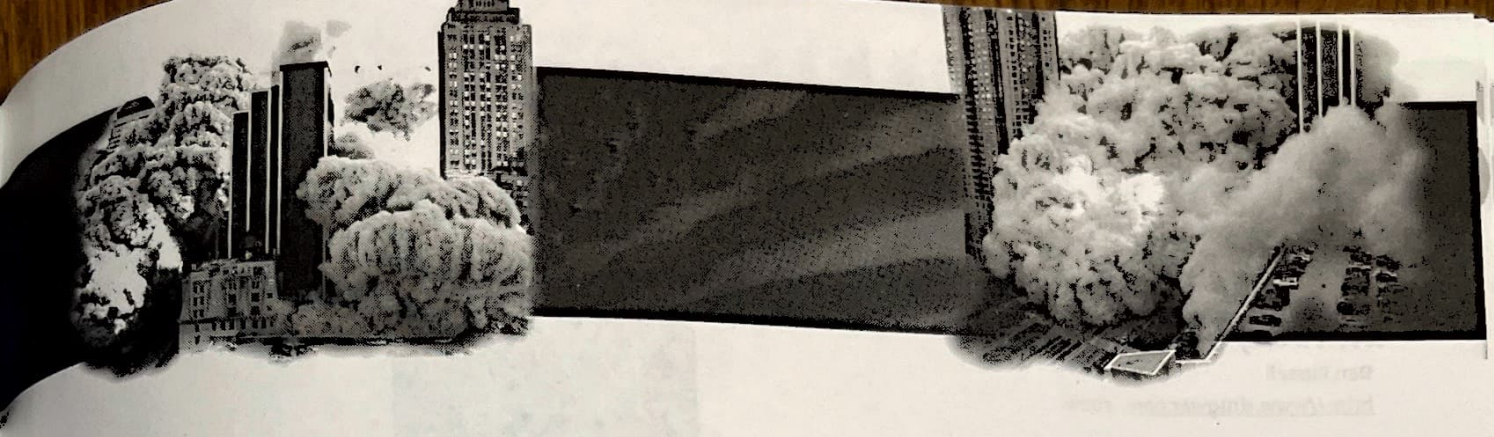
- I am angry at myself for not raising my voice in protest several years ago when Madeleine Albright, then the US Secretary of State, was asked if an embargo was worth the price of the more than 500,000 Iraqi children who died, and she said, ". . . this is a very hard choice, but we think the price was worth it."
- I am angry at myself for not writing more letters to newspaper editors and television commentators asking them why they are so one-sided in their coverage of the war between Israel and Palestine.
- I am angry at myself for not asking my elected representatives why they went along with giving the Taliban $43 million just two months after they destroyed those priceless, 2,000 year old statues of Buddha.
- I am angry at myself for not speaking out more loudly about the fact that not only is the United States the world's largest supplier of weapons to the world, but that the US also provides much of the training in their use.

The list goes on, but I will spare you the rest of the details. I am sure that you have lists of your own. My purpose in only listing the anger directed at myself is to point out the simple fact that in a world as deeply interconnected as ours, we all must accept some responsibility for the shape it is in.

If I had spoken up more, written more letters, read more reports in the foreign press, and done all of those other little things I now wish I had done, would the situation be any different today? Most likely not, but at least I would not be so angry at myself for not doing more.

However, if all of us who feel this way, all of us who seek justice and not revenge, all of us who seek peace and not war now speak up, then hope for a better world remains alive. Personally, I don't have any answers that aren't already on the minds of millions of others. So my response is to post some of these thoughts on our website (http://www.matrixmasters.com). If you know of other sane voices who are able to see the larger picture and have ideas that go beyond the reflexive reactions of those who only want more bloodshed, please send them to us, and we will post them as time permits.

Digital collage by Darin Stumme
"Hawk vs Dove" illustration by Christopher Blosser



There is one last thought I would like to leave you with, and that is what "collateral damage" means in human terms. One of my closest friends lost his mother, his brothers and sisters, his grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins (not to mention most of his friends) when he was eight years old. Over 60 people, human beings with families, friends and full lives, were wiped out in an instant when a bomb, from an American B-52, was accidentally dropped in the wrong place. I didn't see the actual report of this incident, but I know from first-hand experience how they are written. It most likely said, ". . . 60+ civilians, killed in action, collateral damage of friendly fire." When I heard that over 60% of Americans now favor military action in spite of the fact that many innocent civilian lives may be lost, I began to weep. I wept not only for those innocent people who may soon lose their lives, but I also wept for our country. My only hope is that we will come to our senses before the violence reaches even more massive proportions. As a good friend of mine said today, "Killing innocent people is terrorism, no matter who does it."

Larry Hagerty is the author of The Spirit of the Internet: Speculations on the Evolution of Global Consciousness.

Inhaled

by Wesley
September 15, 2001

Thursday I inhaled

steel girders
cement
ethernet cables
telephones
legal briefs
jet fuel
carpet
coffee mugs
human flesh, hair, bones, sinew
desktop computers
fine wines
snappy suits
color print-outs of power point presentations
gold fillings, eyeglasses & hearing aids
rat droppings
sticky notes
terminal breaths vibrating terminal prayers & curses

My throat's dry & my nose runs continually. I haven't felt much this week, but I'll taste it until I'm old & crabby.

Drug War:
Covert Money, Power & Policy
Dan Russell
http://www.drugwar.com, 2000

The subtitle of Dan Russell's epic dissertation, *Drug War: Covert Money, Power & Policy*, says it all. Make no mistake, this is not a book about the so-called "war on drugs" we hear about in the newspapers, the one being fought on our streets between cops and druggies or border guards and drug smugglers. Nor is this the tale of earnest DEA agents matching wits and military hardware in a valiant attempt to bring down international drug lords and dope smugglers in the name of good old American social values. No, this book is something else entirely, nothing less than a scathing exposé of the corrupt power structures which have emerged under the policy of US global drug prohibition, and a detailed look at all the brutalities, genocidal wars, and seedy covert operations that have been financed by the inflated value of prohibited drugs since day one.

Within the 675 pages of this massive and impeccably referenced book, Dan Russell digs deep into the historical wells of covert money and power and pulls no punches when it comes to exposing atrocities and naming names. By following dozens of covert US operations and their illicit money trails from start to finish, Russell manages to link beloved US politicians and security agencies to notorious crime syndicate leaders and butchering third-world dictators in the same paragraph without batting an eye. Yes, it seems people are actually getting rich and powerful off this covert little war, and as it turns out everyone's hands are dirtied by the endless piles of blood money being generated from the policy of global narcotics prohibition.

The covert operations Russell exposes in *Drug War* range from piddling little things like genocide and military coups to more grandiose US events like the Kennedy assassination and the Vietnam war. Maybe you've heard tell of things like Air America and Iran/Contra, or perhaps you've picked up a rumor or two about the CIA's involvement in the trade and importation of weapons for drugs in order to arm and finance Nazi-led death squads in South America? Well, I'm sorry to say that all of those nasty rumors are unfortunately true, and Dan Russell has dug up all the dirt you'll ever need to convince even the most skeptical minds that illicit funds generated from the inflated prices of prohibited drugs were at the center of *all of it*. More than that, it appears that agents of our government were not only complicit in these deeds, but more often than not they were the worst perpetrators in the bunch.

Within the pages of *Drug War* Russell doesn't just speculate or draw weak conclusions from circumstantial evidence, he actually names all of the players and details their official and unofficial affiliations with any overt and/or covert US military and intelligence agencies they have ever been involved with. Beyond that he lists every slime ball drug lord, third-world dictator, guerilla group, hit team, arms trader, smuggler, and corrupt politician they ever did business with, and manages to trace the money trail of these covert operations to all the dirty banks and front corporations set up specifically to launder all the illicit cash they made as they went. He even goes to the level of naming all the major shareholders and board members of these dubious entities, linking the most unlikely of bedfellows from all corridors of politics, business, and organized crime to this never-ending pile of dirty cash. If all of this sounds a bit too much like a giant conspiracy, that's because it is. Russell details every Congressional inquiry or official attempt to publicly uncover these dastardly deeds, and can actually tell you the names of everyone who's conveniently gotten whacked the night before they were supposed to testify, who hit them, who was the patsy, and how it got covered up. Despite the fact that none of this is really secret anymore, the worst of the perpetrators still hold power and continue to get away with it, and that is perhaps the most frightening thing about this book.

While *Drug War* is without a doubt one of the most illuminating books I've ever read, I must warn you that it is by no means an easy book to read. Each paragraph is dense with information that just keeps coming and coming, and just about every other sentence is cross referenced to another major source. A single chapter can contain more acronyms than a bowl of alphabet soup, and new players are introduced on every page. There are CIA agents, DEA agents, politicians, informants, traffickers, kingpins, lieutenants, syndicate goons, narco-guerillas, rebel groups, money launderers, terrorists, indigenous tribal groups, media moguls, journalists, hit teams, wise guys, Cosa Nostra, labor organizers, and on and on. Many of the names you'll probably recognize, others you surely won't. Russell's onslaught of historical documentation comes at the reader almost completely devoid of fanciful storytelling, colorful recreations, or clever context with which to hook the reader's imagination. More often than not Russell prefers to lay out facts with the detached

accuracy of an intelligence file brief (just the facts, ma'am), pulling back only occasionally to crack wise at the most outlandish cover-ups, point-out the most blatant corruptions and hypocrisies being perpetrated at the highest levels of power, or express his personal outrage at the most egregious of human rights violations imaginable. The whole thing is a like a never-ending blur of bad news and human misery, page after page of underhanded Machiavellian deeds being perpetrated by people on the US payroll, paid a salary by you and me. What a nightmare.

Russell takes his sweet time detailing all the atrocities committed by the neocolonial pharmocratic inquisition on Old World shamanism before ever getting to the point of his book, but by the time he hits the prohibition and temperance movements of the early 20th century, Russell's message comes through loud and clear. It appears that the "drug war" we have come to know and love is not just a war on plants and substances, nor is it a war against the "health risks" or "immoral decadence" of using natural inebriants. No, according to Russell the "drug war" is actually a *cultural* war and always has been, and the policies of prohibition are rooted just as firmly in intolerance and cultural prejudice as the Nazi Holocaust was, and is equally as murderous if not more so. More than that, the fallout of these policies has led to the creation of an underground global militant narco-syndicate which is for all purposes above the law and responsible for some of the worst human rights violations in all of recorded history. In short, Russell's claim is that the "drug war" is nothing more than a tool of human oppression used by our government and other corrupt politicians and dictators around the globe to enslave peasant labor, drive up the black market cost of a simple agricultural staple, and generate illicit and untraceable capital to finance covert military campaigns to overthrow hostile governments, put down peasant revolts, and keep themselves in power. Sounds like a nice moral crusade, doesn't it?

By the end of each chapter of *Drug War* my head was reeling. In many cases I had to instantly forget most of what I had just read because the horror of the reality was too much for me to grasp. US covert foreign policy generally includes the training and arming of narco-funded guerillas so they can go out and murder a bunch of innocent people and terrorize them into poverty and submission. Hearing about these events in the abstract is horrific enough, but reading the names of the people who planned, approved, and carried out these illicit drug-funded operations of death made me sick to my stomach. Russell spends dozens of pages on each dirty little war the US has ever been involved in, from Guatemala to Castro's Cuba and the Bay of Pigs; the Kennedy assassination and Vietnam; not to mention Laos, Burma, Bolivia, El Salvador, Columbia, Peru, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Honduras, Mexico, Iraq, Iran, and yes, even Pakistan and Afghanistan. The names of the players change from decade to decade, administration to administration, and region to region, but not surprisingly many of them pop up over and over again (you may know them more recently as Bush, North, McCaffrey, Secord, etc.). But with each chapter the M.O. is always the same: covert military operations, illegal drug trafficking, military hardware, hit squads, corrupt officials, money laundering, coups, genocide, cover-ups, etc. To see the brutal methods of this war spelled out over and over in such excruciating detail is almost too much for the mind to take.

Russell does spend some time at the end of the book discussing the bleak situation back home, going into the dim prison situation and human rights violations created by such asinine policies as Zero Tolerance and Mandatory Minimums. His chapter on forfeitures and seizures and accidental police murders of innocent civilians in the name of the "war on drugs" is as grim as everything else I've read on the subject. His research into the covert ops working behind the scenes of the Kennedy assassination goes on for over 100 pages and, in the end, was completely mind blowing. He also spends some time debunking drug propaganda and attempting to set the scientific record on the physical effects of drug use straight, but by that time the information reads more like a footnote lurking under the larger looming picture of the covert global power structures Russell has exposed.

Rarely do I read a book and have the urge to tell everyone I know that they must stop what they are doing and read it immediately, but with *Drug War* that urge came over me again and again. It is truly a very shocking and astounding book, the reading of which marked a big turning point in my own understanding of prohibition and 20th century covert geopolitics. I thought I knew a few things about the war on drugs, but I didn't know the half of it before Dan Russell pulled all the pieces together for me. He had the guts to tell the whole story like it really is, and engrave the grim history of our country's dirtiest secret on the record forever. I highly recommend you check it out today should you dare know the truth. — ***James Kent***

Emperors Of Dreams:
Drugs in the Nineteenth Century
Mike Jay
Dedalus, 2001

There are two dominant attitudes toward modernity inside contemporary drug culture, and both of them, in almost diametrically opposed ways, attempt to slip outside of our history, that engulfing tsunami of politics and commodities, technology and cultural memes that make up the West. On the one hand you have the romantic turn towards native cultures, an embrace, for example, of the ayahuasca shaman as the font of wisdom and healing. Despite the fact that contemporary native cultures are rarely "pure" (whatever that means), having been forcibly and violently integrated into the Western drama, these cultures are still routinely embraced as if they exist "before" or "outside" the West. This idea, valid in some ways and utterly absurd in others, leads to the eschatological hope that contemporary native world views (and psychoactive technologies) can provide a last-minute corrective to a globalizing West whose developmental addiction to "progress" is leading the planet to the brink of collapse.

In contrast to this idea, which finds in drugs a pathway to a premodern, even prehistorical, mode of being, other heads stress the novel and even revolutionary aspect of freshly minted lab-based psychoactive compounds. Here drugs are treated as novelty agents without historical traces, blank slates upon which we write the emerging forms of transhuman experience and culture. The holistic properties of plants, rooted in both natural and cultural history, is replaced with the microscopic analysis of essentially meaningless molecules. Take MDMA. Despite the host of cultural associations that surround this massively popular compound, especially in the rave scene, the molecule itself remains curiously blank — a faceless feel-good Sci-Fi technology that gestures, not to its own past, but to a future utopian space outside of the fallen history of everyday life.

Or take the smaller scene surrounding new research compounds and novel drug combinations. Here the novelty jones that drives so many individual psychonauts creates a worldview: drugs allow access to spaces and experiences that transcend and even deconstruct the historical frameworks that constrain our everyday selves. The LSD myth is the mother of this story: trumpeted for its transcendental access to modes of thinking and being that break through existing cultural forms, LSD was mythologized as an intrinsically revolutionary molecule, because revolution is the strongest political image we have for a radical break with the past. And yet, as books like *Acid Dreams* and *Storming Heaven* have shown, LSD was one of the most important nonhuman "actors" in postwar American history, leaving its swirly fingerprints on everything from music to politics to advertising. Those fifty-odd years of massive cultural influence don't disappear

when you trip. In other words, while LSD certainly can function as a reprogramming agent, we don't hear nearly enough about its own historically and neurologically engendered "programs," whether they be electrified Eastern mysticism, a predilection for organic patterns like fractals, or a puzzling attraction to the Grateful Dead.

Behind both of these ahistorical approaches to drugs is the old temptation of escape. Along with allowing us to slip for a time outside our mundane lives, drugs seem to provide a tantalizing ride outside of modern history itself. Despite the fact that scheduled psychoactives pervade modern society, to say nothing of caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol, their use allows many people to symbolically and subjectively reject or resist that society (and for understandable reasons!). We all need a little escape, a broomstick flight into strange becomings, but we shouldn't forget that in a networked world like ours, psychoactive counter-cultures are symbiotically linked with the mainstream (whatever that is). In fact, the ancestors of our contemporary drug scenes directly helped create the aesthetic, philosophical, scientific and psycho-social phenomenon we call modernity. In other words, drugs are internal to the dynamics of the West.

When we forget this, we lose touch with many of our most important stories. Lots of psychonauts know more about the snuff-inhaling rituals of feathered jungle dwellers than they do about the ether binges and nitrous oxide carnivals that wowed their own kin just a few turns back up the DNA stream. Losing these stories, we can easily lose the historical awareness that allows us to sanely integrate, within our own historical context, the results of personal experimentation and exploration (to use two historically-charged, deeply Western metaphors for drug use). Many a silly psychedelic scene could have been avoided by the knowledge that stumbling across the apocalyptic key to the cosmos is the oldest rush in the book, no more or less world-rending and inconsequential than falling in love.

Mike Jay's *Emperors of Dreams*, which looks at drug use in nineteenth-century Europe and America, is a fine corrective to this historical amnesia. (Another is Jay's re-issue of James S. Lee's marvelous *Underworld of the East*, a frank and level-headed autobiography of a turn-of-the-century Yorkshire mining foreman who merrily consumed copious hard drugs for almost twenty years during his eastern travels, but never sunk to depravity, delusion, or addiction). Though Jay manages to squeeze fresh juice out of

the usual nineteenth century suspects — Coleridge, Baudelaire, De Quincey, Freud — he also does the more valuable work of putting the drugs these fellows were taking in context. Rather than reinscribe the old romantic story of garret-dwellers and wacky bohemians, Jay helps us understand something more important: how ordinary educated people imagined and integrated drugs into their lives.

Jay is particularly keen to emphasize the role that scientists played in the discovery and propagation of psychoactive fun. Indeed, Jay shows that behind many of the addled literary scenes long canonized in drug lore stands a scientist. Perhaps the paragon here is Humphry Davy, the British scientist and poet who huffed major nitrous at the radical doctor Thomas Beddoes' Pneumatic Institution at the very end of the eighteenth century. Unlike today's scientists, who feel uncomfortable with anything beyond action studies and placebos, these old school researchers were adamant about self-experimentation. Indeed, Davy created the basic format of the trip report that lives on in the Shulgins' books and a myriad Erowid posts.

Jay is at pains to show how modern this approach was: for Davy, the goal was not to download divine revelations but "on Newtonian wings sublime to soar," to push science into a vision of an amazing but altogether human future. Davy also emphasized ideas of agency, responsibility, and scientific possibility that are part and parcel of our modern sense of self. From this perspective, drug experience does not provide ancient wisdom to balance out our alienated modern selves, but rather "holds up a mirror of self-consciousness which strips away the protective cladding of symbol, mystery, and belief, leaving us naked in the keen air of the future, our inner workings visible as never before." [18].

Of course, like LSD and ketamine, nitrous was a scientific invention that entered into modern Western culture free of ancestral myth. But even when it comes to an old school item like opium, Jay shows just how peculiar our contemporary sense of their historical associations can be. The exotic and visionary meanings that opium has for many today would have puzzled the vast majority of its 19th century users. Opium poppies were a common part of the European pharmacopoeia, with a record of use stretching back to the Neolithic, and contained no more poetry for most people than valium does today (Coleridge, for one, seems to have found it mostly a drag). But the image of the drug changed as the British Opium Wars (and its vocal home opponents) generated overwrought stories and images of seedy Oriental opium dens, an association that demonized the drug and associated it with degeneracy, racial threat, and the exotic lassitude of the East. At the same time, the medical industry also consolidated control over the home remedy, a power move that created our contemporary criterion for distinguishing "good" and "bad" opium use: whether or not a doctor has a hand in the process.

Cannabis too had a very different profile two centuries ago. Honky nervous systems were first introduced to THC through another scientist, the French doctor Jacques-Joseph Moreau de Tours. In studying the relative absence of madness among Arabs, Moreau came across hash, consumed it, and found it good. The drug affirmed his then-heretical suspicion that "normal" people had the seeds of madness and delirium within them, and could experience these states if the right conditions arose. Like Davy a fearless self-experimenter, Moreau suggested to other doctors that they take hash in order to better understand the mental world of their patients. He also thought his bohemian friends would enjoy the stuff, and his candyman predilections led to the famous Club des Haschischens, which included the writers Charles Baudelaire, Theophile Gautier, and Gerard de Nerval. These folks took phenomenal, powerfully psychedelic doses, but the habit never really caught on in either bohemian or working class circles, and only towards the end of the century did people start smoking the milder doses we are familiar with today.

Jay's chapter on cannabis has particular relevance to today's bin Laden blitz, because the drug first enters the Western imagination nestled inside the myth of the Assassins, a medieval Islamic sect known for harshing the buzz of many a Crusader. The myth, which first appears in Marco Polo, holds that Hassan-i-Sabbah, Burroughs' "Old Man on the Mountain" and the leader of the sect, would drug young men and then deposit them in a pleasure garden replete with nubile houris and forbidden wine. After waking up and enjoying themselves, the men would be drugged again and then returned to some grim castle. Upon re-awakening, they were told that Hassan had given them a glimpse of the afterlife, and that an eternity of similar glee lay in store for them as long as they did his murderous bidding. According to legend, the brain-washing was so successful that these young assassins would toss themselves off a cliff at the drop of the Old Man's hat. And such legends die hard: today, when we imagine that Islamic suicide missions are pulled off by brainwashed idiots who just want an e-ticket to the seventh heaven, we unconsciously repeat this myth of the drug-addled Saracen. And the story is a myth — along with the nineteenth century Orientalist Baron de Sacy's identification of the name and drug of the sect with hashish.

As Moreau's and de Sacy's investigations suggest, some drugs made their way to Europe on the boats of colonialism (which often carried scientists and anthropologists along for the ride). This is how

(Continued on page 56.)

Emperors Of Dreams:
Drugs in the Nineteenth Century (Continued)

psychedelics trickled into the European minds as well, though this time the science was the ethnography of American Indians and their newfangled pan-tribal peyote rituals (proof that the natives too have their modernisms). Jay tells this story well, but the most interesting part of his psychedelics chapter addresses a question that, for most psychonauts, has always proved tantalizing but vague: what the hell is that mushroom doing in *Alice in Wonderland?* The answer, it seems, is that knowledge of the Siberian shamanic use of Fly Agaric was percolating through the intelligentsia through texts and scientific drawings. Sadly, Jay is forced to conclude that, despite all the shrooms in faery iconography, despite the tales of fungi-munching Viking berserkers and psychedelic druids, and despite all the liberty caps that have long been popping out of cowpies in Albion, there is no suggestion of indigenous British psychedelia.

Much of the fun of *Emperors of Dreams* lies in seeing the familiar rendered strange. But some things are just strange. Jay's weirdest chapter is devoted to ether, a drug that, compared to nitrous oxide's "narrative of Romantic awakenings and transcendental revelations," presents a "low comedy shot through with black farce and queasy tragedy." [124] In addition to rescuing a number of wacky huffers from the dustbin of history, Jay also shows that, despite its rather brutal and toxic dissociative blast, ether was one of the most common party drugs of the nineteenth century. He calls it "the cannabis of its day: a tool of hedonistic and often deliberately irresponsible abandon." [128] Lots of rural folk binged on the stuff, especially when alcohol was tough to come by.

Indeed, one of the more novel parts of Jay's tale is the role that alcohol came to play in the major shift in European drug culture that occurred in the wake of the nineteenth century: Prohibition. The question is this: how could a culture awash in pleasurable and inspiring substances that produced relatively little misery cost turn so sharply against them? Jay argues that drugs followed in the wake of the demonization of alcohol, and the quasi-Christian narratives of drink that came to the fore inside America's powerful temperance movements. But Jay's tale also proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that, despite the rhetoric of prohibition, (ab)use is not really a function of availability, even when it comes to hard drugs. The nineteenth century was saturated with powerful drugs, and the social costs just weren't that high.

Jay's final chapter is a rather scathing indictment of Prohibition, and you realize that much of the aim of *Emperors of Dreams* is to use history to undermine the idiotic ideas that drive the drug war. And the most idiotic idea of all is that modern culture, with all its horrors and glories, is somehow possible, or even imaginable, without drugs. That's the biggest problem with the ahistorical approach to drugs: if we accept the notion that psychoactive commodities are outside of modernity — either because they revive the Paleolithic past or temporarily boot up the posthuman future — then we unconsciously give into the prohibitionist dogma that modernity itself is not psychoactive. The reality is that, as Jay states, drug culture is simply "one manifestation among many of the naturally curious, increasingly well-informed, multicultural consumer culture which our societies are (in every other context) so keen to foster." [244] In order to acknowledge that in the face of drug war dogma, we need to remember and affirm the ordinariness of taking even extraordinary drugs. — ***Erik Davis***

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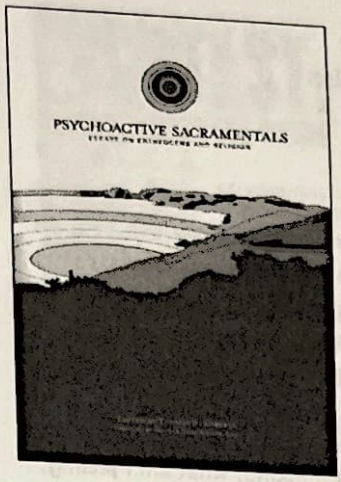
Psychoactive Sacramentals:
Essays on Entheogens and Religion

Edited by Thomas B. Roberts, Ph.D.
Council on Spiritual Practices (http://www.csp.org), 2001



Psychoactive Sacramentals is the latest book in CSP's Entheogen Project Series, a set of books that includes the frustrating anthology, *Entheogens and the Future of Religion,* and Huston Smith's important collection of essays, *Cleansing the Doors of Perception: The Religious Significance of Entheogenic Plants and Chemicals.* The Chicago Theological Seminary and CSP held a conference in 1995, inviting "theologians, clergy, mental health professionals, transpersonal psychologists, and other professionals who shared an interest in entheogens" to get together and discuss the spiritual potential of these substances. *Psychoactive Sacramentals* collects transcripts and new essays from the conference participants into a wide-ranging examination of the complex web of significance that surrounds the notion of an entheogenic approach to spirituality.

I can't really review this book from behind some artificial veil of impartiality; this subject is of pivotal importance to me in my life at this time, and the book's arrival in our review box was eagerly awaited. I grew up deeply religious, attending a Missouri Synod Lutheran school through eighth grade, and attending religious instruction throughout high school in addition to regular worship services. Then a crisis of faith blindsided me in my freshman year of college, and ever since, I have wandered the dark roads and blind alleys of atheism and melodramatic existentialism before most recently settling into an amorphous, disquieting agnosticism. I don't think this profile is particularly uncommon; the umbrella of the psychedelic scene at large contains a wide range of faiths, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions, and there are perhaps many more people who ditched religion and never found a replacement than there are people who are finding their way within potentially rewarding and satisfying paths.

So I approached this book with a cautious eye. I still have yet to become comfortable with the term "entheogen" ("god within"), but I respect those who use it. And at the peak of many of my psychedelic experiences over the past several years, I've felt that blissful sense of connection and meaning that seems to represent a spiritual experience, but at the same time seems to border on the state of ego inflation described by Ann Shulgin in *TIHKAL.*

The book charged right at my skepticism with its first essay, called "If I Could Change Your Mind," by Rev. Mike Young, the first part of which was delivered as a sermon to the First Unitarian Church of Honolulu. My mind boggled at the jarring notion of a sermon in a church involving such topics; clearly my Lutheran upbringing left me ill-prepared for the idea that religious teachers can have such progressive ideas. Young participated in Walter Pahnke's well-known Good Friday experiment, and his essay neatly sums up the core dilemma that the book examines: how do we create a context in which the psychedelic experience can safely occur, and in which the full spiritual potential of these experiences can be explored and expressed?

It's an important question, to be sure. Because we are driven underground in our explorations, because many of us distrust organized religion, and because of how the concept of metaprogramming has influenced parts of this subculture, psychedelic spirituality as it stands can be an intensely solitary pursuit. What this book offers is a varied collection of intelligent perspectives, guideposts that could potentially help disparate groups self-organize along points of resonance. One by one each author presents and examines a piece of the puzzle, and by the end of the book, the puzzle has by no means been solved — but it has definitely been clearly identified, and that in itself is a great step.

Huston Smith, one of the world's foremost authorities on comparative religion, writes early on, "It seems clear that entheogens can produce religious experiences, but less clear that they can produce religious lives." Roger N. Walsh, author of *Essential Spirituality: The Seven Practices Common to World Religions,* takes this a step further: "Entheogens may not produce religious lives, but they may initiate and deepen the religious lives of those who commit themselves to some form of spiritual practice." One of the first examples we see is Stanislav Grof, whose essay "Entheogens as Catalysts of Spiritual Development" is a great introduction to Grof's work in his own words. He began life as an ardent atheist and wound up a very spiritual person. Experimenting over and over again with LSD demonstrated that human consciousness obviously included a mystical component — the "holotropic" states that are often mistaken for delusional or psychotic states, but which actually represent true spiritual encounters. "What began as a therapeutic quest for the roots of emotional and psychosomatic problems changed spontaneously into a spiritual and philosophical quest," Grof writes. "Healing now became a side effect of the mystical quest."

Grof's journey led him to develop holotropic breathwork, a renowned technique of transpersonal psychology. Few of us are likely to reach such heights, but Charles T. Tart offers another piece of the puzzle, broadening the notion of what might be a legitimate form of practice by suggesting "mindfulness" as an option. Tart's 1969 anthology *Altered States of Consciousness* helped pioneer a field of study, and he reminds us very clearly that "Entheogens are powerful helpers, but they don't guarantee these outcomes... They don't automatically

(Continued on page 58.)

Psychoactive Sacramentals:
Essays on Entheogens and Religion (Continued)

guarantee growth or love or light or revelation. They can be used in the service of other belief systems, and used in a very nasty kind of way." This is the double-edged sword aspect that perhaps makes the rest of society so frightened of what psychedelics represent. Integrating these experiences into daily life is what needs examination, and what usually seems to need the benefit of some form of mindfulness practice. Tart describes mindfulness as "learning to tune in on a moment by moment basis to what am I thinking, what am I feeling, what am I sensing, what's the state of the world around me, what's my state and so forth." There are many avenues to this kind of awareness, presumably, but we are at a disadvantage in our society if we intend to find our way to this state without relying on a tradition that has stood the test of time.

On the other end of the spectrum is the essay "Mysterious Tea," by Annelise Schinzinger, a woman who was a member of União do Vegetal in Brazil for eighteen years. Her description of UDV's practices has the compelling, quietly authoritative, internally consistent tone of a full, deep, meaningful belief system — this one just happens to incorporate twice monthly sessions with ayahuasca. She reiterates the need to incorporate insights gained from ayahuasca sessions into daily life, and offers many interesting examples and visions. In fact, this essay exemplifies for me the problem of staring at someone else's belief system, and "wishing it were so" for me. She offers good background information on the many different religious roots of UDV, and gives inspiration for the notion that an entheogenic religion can be pieced together anew — but it's also clear that that's a treacherous path, upon which so much New Age mushiness has been the result.

"What Is Entheology?" by Rev. Aline M. Lucas presents a potential blueprint. She describes an experiment known as the Harvard Agape, in which a cross-section of divinity students pulled themselves together to create a syncretic, one-time only ritual utilizing MDMA as a sacrament. One participant reported, "We were continually possessed by a spirit of community... we all became better people, and certainly closer friends through our common experience of the agape." The book doesn't necessarily lead you to believe that you could substitute "random group of friends" for "divinity students," of course. But this does point at my suspicion for what might substitute as an appropriate framework for those for whom "entheology" is too loaded an idea: "community" might be sufficient to contain the experience, and to generate and contain a body of tradition and knowledge that is suffused with both meaning and safety the way a religious tradition is.

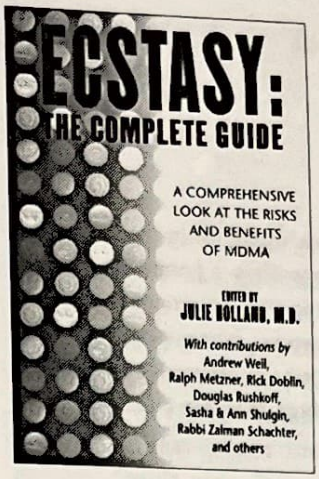
Myron Stolaroff's "A Protocol For A Sacramental Service" provides a framework for structuring entheogenic experiences, utilizing an experienced guide, a motivated, healthy candidate, and an overwhelming dose. Ann Shulgin's "The New Psychotherapy: MDMA and The Shadow" adds pieces to this as well, in one of many places where the book implies an overt overlap between psychotherapeutic and spiritual practices. And probably the most pressing of these essays is "The Birthing of Transcendental Medicine," by Rev. Karla A. Hansen, who faced terminal breast cancer with the help of entheogens, and who described how one very key experiment conducted using LSD to help cancer patients prepare for death led to a brief but promising and important burst of research. The well-publicized story of Sue Stevens and her husband has already begun to condition the media that MDMA might have important possibilities for assuaging terminal patients of physical pain and psychological stress, and we also know the story of Aldous Huxley, who firmly believed that utilizing LSD in terminal cases "would make dying a more spiritual, less strictly physiological process," and who used LSD on his deathbed to transition from this life to whatever happens next. Hansen's moving story reaffirms the importance of continuing this research, especially at a time when our culture's attitudes toward the end phases of life are so unhealthy and bizarre.

There's a lot more to digest here, and not every essay resonates as fully as these do. There are some inexplicable moments where it's clear the book is trying to do too much, to address too many problems and issues, and the anthology format definitely leaves you to your own devices for interpretation. And in a few places, there are uncomfortable undertones of something approaching elitism — this time a spiritual elitism, instead of the intellectual elitism of Huxley's day.

But as Grof points out, "True spirituality is universal and all-embracing and is based on personal mystical experience rather than on dogma or religious scriptures." When it comes to finding a place for these drugs in your life, you are always ultimately alone as you make your choices, without the benefit of a priestly caste to guide you. There's no psychedelic Torah or Bible or Quran, and there likely never will be. And some of us will likely never again feel the comforting sensation of sharing a rich, historical belief system with a congregation of like-minded parishioners. Instead, we're left with small, quiet, personal messages from one unique soul to another, hopeful transmissions that remind us we do at least share some basic human experiences with each other, we do at least share some deep and meaningful parts of the journey called life with each other. Some of those hopeful transmissions are contained in *Psychoactive Sacramentals*, by the grace of a few outstanding souls. It is small comfort, but comfort nonetheless. — ***Scotto***

Ecstasy: The Complete Guide

Edited by Julie Holland, M.D.
Park Street Press, 2001



Ecstasy: The Complete Guide is a mammoth, 400+ page new anthology, whose subtitle — "A Comprehensive Look at the Risks and Benefits of MDMA" — sets out the ambitious nature of the book's scope. This extensive set of essays touches on nearly the gamut of issues surrounding Ecstasy in our society today, from a fundamental look at what is known about how MDMA works, to in-depth examinations of toxicity and risk issues, to explorations of potential psychotherapeutic and clinical use of MDMA and discussions of how policy might best be changed to accommodate MDMA research.

Before I continue, I should offer a disclaimer: I am by no means qualified to make any statements about the accuracy of the information presented here. I'm not a neuroscientist, a chemist, a psychotherapist, a mental health professional, a policy wonk, or any kind of M.D., Ph.D., or anything else. I have a bachelor's degree in theatre, for God's sake. It may well be the case that I am in no way, shape, or form part of the target audience for this book. By the same token, David Nichols, Ph.D., states in his chapter on "The Chemistry of MDMA" that he was asked to "Explain the molecule to the masses... Keep it elementary." Aha! I am definitely "the masses." In fact, the book treads a very difficult path through what may seem elementary to the authors and what may nevertheless be overwhelmingly technical to interested laypeople such as myself.

So here's my report. There is a damn lot of information in this book, a huge heaping pile of great information to be exact, so much information that my brain definitely throbbed in protest trying to understand it all and keep it all straight. Jessica Malberg, Ph.D., and Katherine R. Bonson, Ph.D. provide an excellent introductory tour of "How MDMA Works in the Brain." Matthew Baggot and John Mendelson, M.D. provide an exhausting and vividly good summary of the toxicology research, in a chapter called "Does MDMA Cause Brain Damage?" that was the layperson's equivalent of learning how to speak a foreign language by being stranded without clothing or food in a war zone and having to ask around for directions to the nearest bus station. It's the single most important chapter in the book for people wanting to educate themselves about MDMA neurotoxicity. Karl Jansen, Ph.D. provides a typically lucid description of mental health risks associated with MDMA — indeed, it's the best of the most technical chapters at communicating clearly with a lay audience.

Then, after laying out some of the risks, we start to get into some of the potential benefits. Ralph Metzner, Ph.D. and Sophia Abramson describe "Using MDMA in Healing, Psychotherapy, and Spiritual Practice." It's a good thing Holland organized the book to present all the risks first, because hearing Metzner and Abramson go on about MDMA is worse than watching the movie *Groove* — you wind up with an immediate, pressing desire to do as big a pile of MDMA as you can get your hands on, regardless of how many axons are sacrificed in the process. The most inspiring parts of the book are a trio of essays that describe how MDMA could be used to treat Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, and schizophrenia, as well as ongoing discussions of MDMA's use in palliative care. It is very heartening to see this kind of thinking, and to know that some of this research is actually happening in various parts of the world.

The book does, however, have its problems. In many ways, a book that calls itself *The Complete Guide* to anything is begging for someone to run up and shout, "Oh yeah? What about *this?* What about *that?*" In this instance, the book's lone chapter on "The History of MDMA" is insanely underwhelming; it reads like the Cliff's Notes to the Reader's Digest Condensed Version of a *USA Today* pie chart on the subject. If you really want a thorough examination of the cultural history of MDMA, check out *The Book of E* by Push & Mireille Silcott, an anthology that does a far better job of digging into the explosion of Ecstasy around the world from a historical perspective. As it stands, *The Complete Guide*'s treatment and discussion of rave culture seems ultimately condescending and dismissive, no matter how many nice things the authors have to say about the "ideals" of rave culture. It gets very old hearing all these scientists and therapists talking about what rave culture is all about; no one would think it appropriate to ask a bunch of ravers to try and summarize toxicity research or psychotherapeutic approaches, yet apparently it's perfectly appropriate for these folks to offer unqualified capsule reviews of why rave culture is important and what's meaningful about it. (Note: Emanual Sferios and Douglas Rushkoff do not constitute adequate spokespeople for rave culture!) *The Book of E* has a lot more credibility on that subject.

This may be a symptom of the larger problem posed by the book, the fundamental problem of determining the audience for its messages. Is this book likely to convince regulatory officials to see the light and suddenly drop their opposition to MDMA? Doubtful. Is it likely to convince tens of thousands of ravers around the nation who are contributing to a massive public health problem every week to back off the little pills for a while? Doubtful. Is it likely to convince reasonably responsible recreational users that their best interests are served by letting the government control access to MDMA via the medical community? Doubtful.

(Continued on page 60.)

Ecstasy: The Complete Guide
(Continued)

But anyone with a greater than casual interest in the subject will likely find food for thought here regardless. I finished the book a couple weeks ago, and I'm still chewing on my reactions to proposed policy, proposed therapeutic frameworks, proposed definitions of "recreational" and "spiritual" use. Perhaps calling it *The Complete Guide* was a bit overreaching, but these folks are on a mission, so what do you expect? — ***Scotto***

Bubbles & Bones
Erika Stucky
Traumton Records, 2001

You know you're in good hands with a woman who wears elf ears on her album cover photos. Erika Stucky is an avant-garde jazz musician who has assembled a cabaret of weirdness on her new release, *Bubbles & Bones*. Previously known for her group the Sophisticrats, which was comprised of four singers and a bass player, her new group includes her own bizarre cabaret vocal stylings (hee, I said "vocal stylings"!) and accordion-playing, as well as backup sousaphone, trombones, melodica, and tuba. Her bio says she was born in San Francisco to Swiss parents during the flower power era, and she's crazy enough to list both Frank Zappa and the Monkees as influences; imagine Randy Newman getting hit by a tanker truck full of LSD, or Beth Gibbons from Portishead suddenly opting for a career singing fucked up Bertolt Brecht tunes on the dinner theatre circuit, and you're starting to get the idea. There's nothing quite like the sound of this motley ensemble attacking such jazz standards as "Roxanne," "I Want You (She's So Heavy)," and of course, "Walk This Way," never mind Stucky's own original musings, including "But Honey, I'm Perfectly Sober, Let Me Drive!" This release comes highly recommended for those evenings when some damn fool won't shut up about the hot new *MTV Amp Vol. 53* album. — ***Scotto***

Blow
Foetus
Ectopic Music, 2001

Blow is an album of remixes based on Foetus' album *Flow*, also released this year. *Flow* struck me as interesting in that sort of hard core style of weirdness, a la Mr. Bungle but with more avant jazz and less crazy circus clown pedophilia — you're either into this kind of aggressive weird or you ain't. But in the meantime, the remix album *Blow* is a fantastic way to expose yourself to the far out sounds of Foetus. The remixes here are uniformly excellent, and because the source material is so bizarre, each remix comes from its own separate planet, making for a great, fun, trippy album. Right from the get go, Amon Tobin lays down a killer remix of "Cirrhosis of the Heart" that sets the tone for the whole experience. Tobin's signature darkness and his always stellar beats take Foetus to a new level of creepy grooviness — indeed, I'll be coming back to this CD a lot just to hear this swankadelic track. Franz Treichler of the Young Gods provides a quietly ominous "The Need Machine" remix. The Phlyr mix of "Mandelay" has a wild and funky, vaguely industrial undercurrent, and Charlie Clouser, a member of Nine Inch Nails, produces a kickass, overtly industrial mix of "Quick Fix." DJ Food provides the "feed em their rights" mix of "Suspect," a track absolutely cinematic in its sinister scope and nature. And Ursula 1000 turns in a delightfully twangy remix that somehow stays true both to their own roots in the "go-go-moderne" style, and the wacked out vocal stylings (hee, I said "vocal stylings" again!) of Foetus mastermind J. G. Thirlwell. All in all, *Blow* is a delightfully twisted tour on the dark side. — ***Scotto***

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Sweet Mother Recordings Label Review

Since 1995, Seattle-based Sweet Mother Recordings has put out a series of releases that longtime viewers of this program may enjoy. The Sweet Mother imprint on a rekkid is a sure sign of yumminess, usually of the smooth'n'downtempo variety; their releases are indicative of a creative intelligence that's well worth seeking out. Here's a quick look at some of their output over the years:

Strange Voices – Strange Voices

Strange Voices draws immediate comparison to Morcheeba, with slick female vocals and smoky programs and beats to back her up; however, the group kicks out more aggressive beats, snapping it out of the mire that sometimes holds trip hop back.

Standout tracks: the trippy title track; the kicking harmonies and laid back funk of "All Right For Now"; the twisted psychedelic vocals of "Every New Reality"; the beautiful piano that highlights the haunting "Till You Show"; and of course, the delicious "Herbal Recipe" (three guesses what it's about).

Dragonfly – Timestream

Smooth and spacy, this is a neat fusion of slow, murky trip hop, and em:t style ambient programming. At first listen, you can miss the intricacies of the music, but slap on your headphones and the music's complexity and depth comes out.

Standout tracks: "Hunters," a serene little groove that opens the album; the sweet "funkalepathy" for "hiphopatarians" provided by guest vocalist Om Johari on "Om"; the slightly ominous, churning melodies of "Pleiades" and "Ice Bag"; and of course, who doesn't enjoy a little "Angel Dust" now and then?

Plastiq Phantom – Enjoy The Art Of Lying Down

Experimental techno resembling a cross between Autechre and old school Art of Noise, but with a unique signature. Plastiq is an absolute madman when he performs, but his album is a more subdued, restrained slice of electronic weirdness.

Standout tracks: "Kicking Mister Bubbles" with its relentless clattering and mechanical melody; the radio static and samples that drive "Slouch," creating an atmosphere of music desperately trying to reach its destination.

The Verbrilli Sound – Many Coloured Butterflies

One of the smoothest albums I've heard in a long time. The Verbrilli Sound rides the border between innocuous loungebeat and innocuous trip hop, dropping in just enough personality to create a mix that works surprisingly well... it's subconscious music as opposed to background music.

Standout tracks: the cool, chill, Martian funk of "Descender"; the simple geetar groove that leads us to the quietly uplifting ending of "Finger Dippin'"

Various Artists – Free Activation Series Vols. 1 & 2; Room Service; Limitless Luxury

Sweet Mother's DJ Nasir has assembled a set of excellent compilations featuring the likes of Tosca, United Future Organization, Bahamadia, Buscemi, Ursula 1000, Thievery Corporation, Jazzanova, Groove Armada, Arling and Cameron, Air, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Trüby Trio, and more, as well as choice tracks from Sweet Mother artists Plastiq Phantom, Strange Voices, and Dragonfly. *Free Activation Series Vol. 1* features my absolute favorite track from these albums, a divine track by Pigeonhed called "Glory Bound," but all are worth investigation. —***Scotto***

Nature Loves Courage

Çatal Hüyük
Icaro Records, 2000
1503 Cahuenga Blvd., LA, CA, 90028

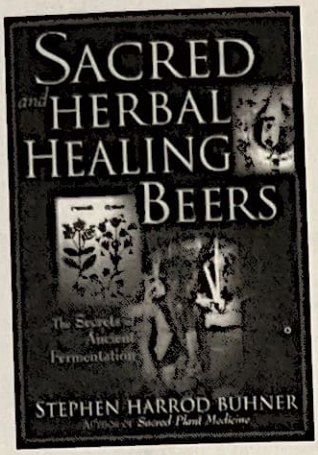
Urban shaman Jacques Olivier (aka J5MEO) brings his medicine to the dance floor on this EP release.

"Anything Can Happen (trance mix)" spirals into the vortex with a pull, fusing electronic beats with the commentary of visionary philosopher Terence McKenna, to whom the release is dedicated. "Ultimately, what we're touching is the invisible, all pervasive intelligence that surrounds us and penetrates us. It is grooming us to tolerate its splendor," McKenna intones, further adding: "We may never know what hit us."

"Into the light of the naked truth" responds J5MEO on the second trance track on the disc, "El Alien." Drums, guitar, cello, indigenous instruments and ambient jungle sounds help to further electrify the vibe on this excellent entheo soundtrack. Less trance oriented songs on the release include "Icaro Ayahuasca" and excerpts from a McKenna lecture given at Uxmal in 1998.

Çatal Hüyük is a loosely formed collective of LA area musicians who will hopefully flow through with more offerings. As it is, this first release comes highly recommended. —***BSP***

Sacred Herbal & Healing Beers:
The Secrets of Ancient Fermentation
Stephen Harrod Buhner
Brewers Publications, 1998



Right from the start, Stephen Harrod Buhner claims his book is heresy, "that fermentation and plant use—as medicine, as psychotropics, as teachers, as companions on our life path—are an inescapable part of what it means to be human." It's not exactly clear what the heresy stands against, aside from a vague notion of "popular beliefs" regarding alcohol, and undefined "politically correct" assumptions of material reality. The disclaimer that historically, alcohol is part of human culture, seems highly unnecessary.

In his first chapter, the author describes a "fall of Eden" scenario in the history of brewing. According to the myths in many ancient cultures, fermentation was handed to humans as a gift from a god or goddess, to be brewed by women in a sacred fashion; however, as Western civilization has grown, the process of brewing has passed to male hands and eventually to machines. Ever since, brewing has become an economic enterprise, and modern culture has lost touch with the sacred and healing aspects of fermentation. We can reclaim our Eden by honoring those aspects and restoring them to their rightful place.

This premise is interesting at first, but it gets a little tired from reiteration, paragraph after paragraph. Still, reading the parallels between brewing myths from one culture to the next throughout the following chapters is fascinating, reminiscent of Jungian archetypes and Joseph Campbell's work. Regardless of the base of their beers — honey, bananas, agave, corn, rice, wheat, barley, millet — each culture has similar stories regarding the gift of fermentation, and each has discovered beneficial properties of local plants as medicinal additives.

An early chapter discusses the narcotic effects of heather and the amazing medicinal qualities of honey; it alone is worth the price of admission (and is an early reward for slogging through the introductory dogma). Other books on brewing will tell you that mead is regarded as being the first fermented beverage known to humankind, but no brewing book goes into the depth of honey and hive products like this one. Among the startling facts: honey has been known to provide faster wound healing than pharmaceutical medicines; several groups of researchers have lived up to three months on milk and honey alone; many researchers claim that humans could live on a diet solely of pollen and water; consumption of hive products has been linked to lifespans of 150 years and older... the list continues. Peppered with recipes, poems and footnotes, the chapter on honey meads and heather ales is quite astonishing and well-researched.

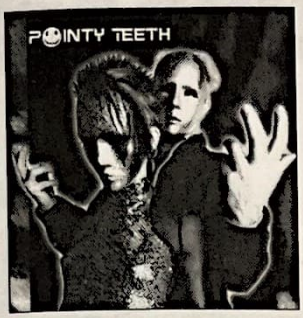
The chapters that follow describe histories and brewing processes for a wide variety of brews made from grains, fruits and saps, as well as medicinal qualities of various plant additives. Dozens of recipes appear, in their original context or scaled down for experimentation at home. All components of beer and similar brews are covered: fermentable sugars, yeasts, and bittering agents such as hops.

Quite interesting is the history of how hopped beer came into favor, edging out the traditional European "gruit ale" favored at the time. Demonized during the Protestant Reformation by religious/political/economic interests for its "unhealthy" narcotic, aphrodisiacal, and psychotropic qualities, the history of gruit ale prohibition — replaced by the hopped beer we know today — strikes a similar resonance to the prohibition of cannabis in American history.

The chapter devoted solely to "psychotropic and highly inebriating beers" is another eye-opener, exploring the often hallucinogenic effects of additives such as yarrow root, wormwood, mandrake, wild lettuce, and saffron. Although some of the plant additives are obscure or unknown to contemporary botanists, an appendix of sources listed at the back of the book could jump-start a search for rare ingredients. The author warns early on that he has not brewed every recipe listed, so your mileage may vary.

The book wraps up with chapters on beers made from medicinal trees (including recipes for alcoholic ginger, birch, and root beers) and medicinal plants (including recipes calling for mint, rosemary and St. John's Wort). Concluding the book are appendices on meads, resources for supplies and further reading, and a section describing simplistic brewing techniques at home. It's apparent that the author is a better historian than homebrewer, though he claims his homebrewing ideas are simply further extensions of the heresies expressed in earlier chapters.

I didn't find the book all that heretical or shocking, though it might be considered so in highly conservative or tight academic circles. I did find it to be very informative, describing medical qualities of plants in a very accessible manner. There are certainly better books out there to help the beginning brewer, though experienced homebrewers looking for brews with healing properties or a hallucinogenic kick should find this book extremely intriguing. — ***Darin***

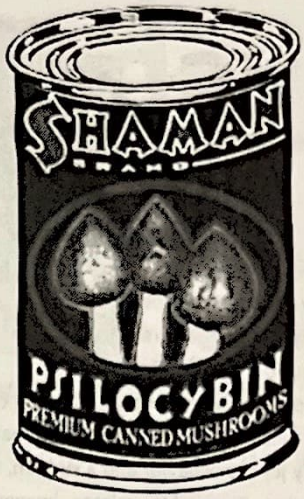


Cinema-Tech
Pointy Teeth
DivaNation Records, 2001

Pointy Teeth is one of a seemingly endless succession of interesting musical escapades from Chicago-area musician Preston Klik. In *Trip #6*, we told you about his "goth ambient" side project, Bed of Roses, whose 1998 album *The Kissing Tree* was so impressive. Now he's joined forces with DJ Carbon Star, whose band is (I'm not joking) a finalist for VH1's *Band on the Run* program, to create Pointy Teeth, an uptempo electronica group that is essentially the polar opposite of the chill serenity of Bed of Roses.

One of the thing that vividly irritates me about electronic music is keeping track of the eleventy gajillion separate sub-sub-sub-sub-sub-sub-sub genres that people keep inventing. Despite that many names, I still have zero idea how best to categorize Pointy Teeth. Other reviewers have apparently described them as "organica" and "emo-house." I think what they're getting at is, first and foremost, the vocal stylings (hee, I said "vocal stylings" *again!*) of DJ Carbon Star actually seem warm, purposeful, and elegantly integrated into the mixes, without sounding like Generic House Diva, or her cousin Classic Sixties Soul Diva Brought Out Of Retirement For This Very Special Single. Then of course there's Preston, credited on this release as providing "beats & noises." Preston's sound is continually evolving, and his first full scale foray into unabashed electronica in no way betrays his years of live performance. *Cinema-Tech* as a title describes a kind of music that transcends the dance floor and captures your imagination with — yes, I'll say it — organic undercurrents and excellent melodic textures. The beats are consistently creative, and the album flows from start to finish like a waterfall of groove.

Cinema-Tech is certainly one of the freshest sounding techno albums I've heard in a long time. Here's hoping Preston and DJ Carbon Star get together again soon, since the only disappointment here is the 45-minute length of the disc. Still, it's 45 minutes I've been listening to over and over again since I got the CD in the first place.
—*Scotto*



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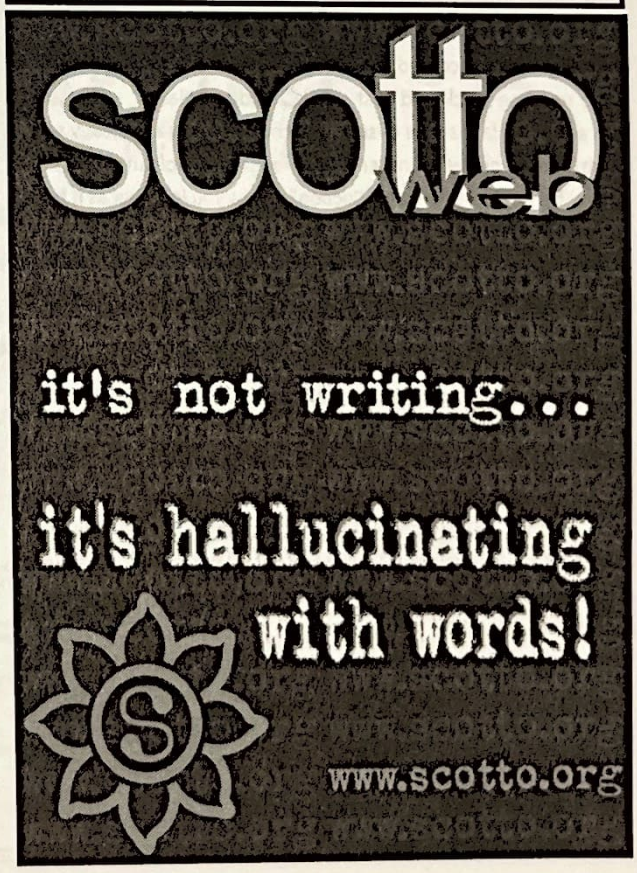

Vespertine

Björk
Elektra Entertainment, 2001

Björk is dangerously close to becoming her own genre, a Schedule I artist whose every musical gesture causes profound psychic realignments and peculiar new euphorias. The long term health effects of listening to her music are not yet known, but many habitual users exhibit abnormally joyous behavior and a sudden, often irreversible distaste for lesser pop. Björk's fifth release, known on the street as *Vespertine*, is a work of enormous potency.

One of the strengths of Björk's music has been its capacity to feel intimate even when her vocals are riding a thousand decibels atop a thundering train wreck of new sounds. On *Vespertine* that voice is often heard whispering into delicate snows and the effect is no less earth shattering. Björk created most of this album at her home in Iceland, sampling noises from around the house for beats during the long dark winter. Entering the studio with this work, she called upon the brilliant electronic music duo Matmos, harpist Zeena Parkins and previous collaborators such as Vince Mendoza (who taught Björk choral and orchestral arrangement for the *Dancer in the Dark* soundtrack) to furnish flourish and an acoustic intricacy that pushes the vanguard of recorded music.

The opening track and first single, "Hidden Place," seduces you into a musical landscape of subdued choral echoes and heavy waves of strings riding over, under and through wet volcanic beats and exotic rhythms. The delicate "Cocoon" draws you in closer as if half in a dream with dripping beats as soft as snowmelt. "It's Not Up To You" is a sweet song about the impossibility of mastering "the perfect day" that floats lightly and most resembles the musical numbers she created for the *Dancer in the Dark* soundtrack.

In "Undo" Björk begins with a minimalist opening and builds to a sort of enveloping sound with an ethereal choir. "Its not meant to be a strife/It's not meant to be a struggle uphill" the chorus repeats just above a whisper in a song about letting go of pain. Björk's lyrics here are often enigmatic as in songs like "An Echo, A Stain" and "Harm Of Will" (penned by Harmony Korine). In "Sun In My Mouth" she draws from poet e.e. cummings ("I will wade out till my thighs/ Are steeped in burning flowers") and in "Heirloom" she recounts the details of a recurring dream.

"Pagan Poetry" recalls the near operatic build of her earlier "Bachelorette" (from *Homogenic*) but with a softer air that feels like the morning stretch after a solid slumber. It is the first of three tracks to make use of traditional Victorian style music boxes custom built to play arrangements by Björk. The next track, "Frosti," is all music box and illustrates Björk's talent as a composer and provides a segue into the album's peak experience: "Aurora," a lush and delicate song that soars like prayer. Björk, invoking the Aurora Borealis as a goddess, intones "I fill my mouth with snow/the way it melts/I wish to melt into you".

Björk's unique voice has an emotional rawness capable of carving into the fabric of space — even the drawing of breath plays on the ears. There is a directness and certainty in her delivery on this album. Lines sung like frozen honey tremble with immediacy of feeling. Much like the hermit-style environment where it was composed, *Vespertine* wants to be listened to in comfort and possibly solitude. If you've been waiting for an excuse to spring for a new pair of headphones, this is a good one. As with other releases from Björk, reports suggest this one combines exquisitely with a wide range of entheogens, or perhaps while washing the dishes. — ***Tonx***

Hildegard von Bingen

Garmana
NorthSide, 2001

Garmana: Swedish folk rock group. Hildegard von Bingen: twelfth century abbess and mystic, one of the first female composers on record. The new album *Hildegard von Bingen* by Garmana: crazy good! Garmana blends old school (*really* old school) Latin lyrics and melodies by von Bingen with their own modern programming and musical textures to create a haunting album. At first I feared this was going to wind up sounding like Enigma — generic, watered down beats, with random chanting monks from an old Library of Congress LP scattered about. Not so! Garmana compare favorably to Afro Celt Sound System, although they've been around longer, and on this album, they're more of a Medieval Swedish Sound System, but hey, who's complaining? The music is pretty and dark, gothic and spiritual, and lead singer Emma Härdelin's wonderful voice is perfectly suited for rendering the straight tones of von Bingen's compositions amidst the lush mix of acoustic instruments and synthesized sounds. — ***Scotto***

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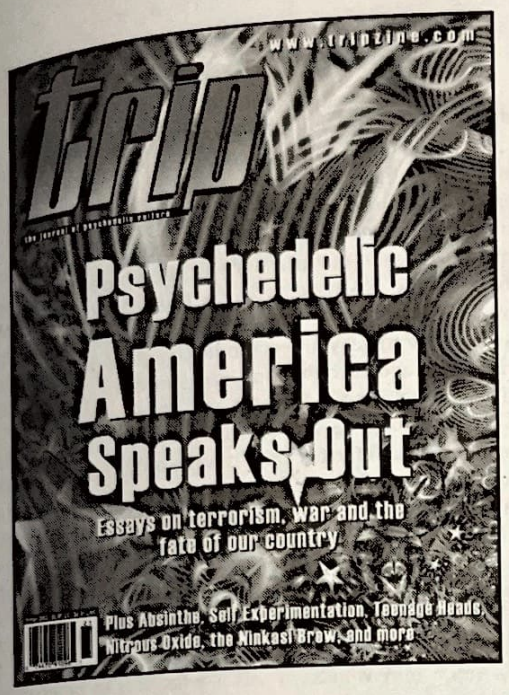

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Has this ever happened to you?
by David Moses Fruchter

You're driving, you're driving home, and along the way you happen to fall in behind another car. This other car must be traveling to a destination near your own, for as you make the various turns necessary to get to your house you find yourself still following that other car. You begin to feel terribly embarrassed that the driver of the other car might think you were following them on purpose. You hope they're not a woman driving alone, fearful that you are a stalker, a rapist, or some other form of human predator. Finally the car turns down your very street, and you wonder which of your neighbors will have a visitor — this is not a car you've ever seen in your neighborhood, and you like to think you pay attention to those sorts of things. Imagine your surprise when the car pulls into your own driveway, and parks. A stylishly dressed young man gets out of the car — perhaps the artistically inclined son of affluent parents. He does not appear to notice as you pull into your driveway behind him. As you get out of the car, the young man is walking up to your front door — you hear the jingle of his keys. You call out to him: "Excuse me! Excuse me?" but he does not respond. You see him unlock your front door, go inside, and shut the door behind him. The thought of calling the police briefly crosses your mind, but for some reason you feel sure that the young man poses no threat to you, and you find yourself more curious than anything else. You walk to the front door, open it, and enter your house. Only it is not your house. Or rather it is your house, as it might have been if someone else lived there. Your comfortable, family-style furniture has been replaced with a seeming mixture of junkshop antiques and home-made nouveau ragtag. You live in this house with your wife and four-year-old daughter, yet as you look around you gain the distinct impression that this is a single person's dwelling, something about the idiosyncrasy of furniture arrangement, the collection of objects seeming to represent a single solitary aesthetic, albeit an eclectic and haphazard one. You find your attention particularly arrested by a painting hung over the mantelpiece, right where your wife's framed autographed photo of Dwight David Eisenhower had been, the one she had been given by her grandmother. In its place is a gigantic painting of an eye, so detailed as to be photorealistic, though you can also discern the painter's careful brushstrokes. As you further examine the eye, you realize that what is so remarkable to you about it is that it could easily be a picture of your own eye. You have an idiosyncratic eye color which crudely falls into the broad category of hazel, and the painting over the mantle captures it precisely: the thin ring of yellowish brown on the outer edge of the iris, fading into the speckled brownish green which makes up the bulk of your eye color. It's uncanny. It must be your eye, it could only be your eye. Though this had never occurred to you before, you now feel sure that a person knows their own eye when they see it. A gigantic portrait of your own eye, hanging over the mantle in your living room.

The young man has gone into the kitchen, and is now bustling about — he appears to be making tea. You realize that in your surprise at seeing your home so transformed, you have left the front door standing open behind you. You now turn and slam it as hard as you can, in an attempt to gain the young man's attention. It works, after a fashion: you hear the young man say, "What the fuck?!" and he pokes his head into the living room, where you stand. However, apparently seeing nothing unusual, he returns to the kitchen. He has not acknowledged your presence in the house in any way, though you feel he must have seen you. He could not have missed you. You follow the young man into the kitchen, and there, hung on the wall across from the stove, you see another painting. This one is much more abstract. Wild and cacophonous bursts of color litter the canvas. The mood of the painting is frenetic and dangerous. Then, in the lower right corner, you see a single black shape. It is the only black in the entire painting, and furthermore it is the only visually representational element you can make out. Of course there is an argument to be made that abstract art is still a kind of representation, that anything produced by a human hand represents at least something of the internal state of the producer of that thing, but this argument does not particularly concern you at the moment. The black shape is an outline or silhouette of what appears to be a family: a man, a woman, and a small child. You find yourself recognizing the hairstyles, the postures. Yes. It is your family. You briefly wonder if this is what it is to be dead, but just as quickly you discard the notion. You feel your heart beating in your chest; you breathe, and sense, and think; you are alive.

Though you now stand only a few feet away from him, the young man continues to refuse to acknowledge your presence. For some reason, you find this very irritating. After all, he's got your eyeball, and your family, hanging on the walls of his home — your home — the least he can do is meet your gaze, introduce himself, explain. After all, you're a human being, just like he is. What's his problem?! Now enraged, you wait for him to turn to the refrigerator to retrieve the milk for his tea and you snatch up the teacup and saucer he has set out for himself and hurl them violently into the kitchen sink. As they smash against the stainless steel, reality seems to slow, and you are able to see every individual shard of porcelain and track its trajectory. You have time to wonder if this is what it is like to be an autistic child, who sees a box of matches spill to the ground and immediately knows exactly how many matches there are. However, this moment of slowed motion does not last for very long, and the normal flow of time resumes as the sound of breaking china reaches your ears. You turn to see the young man's reaction, but it is not the young man standing there at all, but rather your wife, who is staring at you with a mixture of anger and fear. "What the hell is the matter with you?" she asks, and you turn to see your familiar old furniture back in its place, Ike gazing benevolently down from above the mantle, your daughter turning from the television set to find out what all the noise is about. In the young man's house, there hadn't even been a television. Without replying to your wife, you walk unhurriedly to the front door, go outside, and go to sit behind the wheel of your car. And you wonder, how things, got to be, the way they are.

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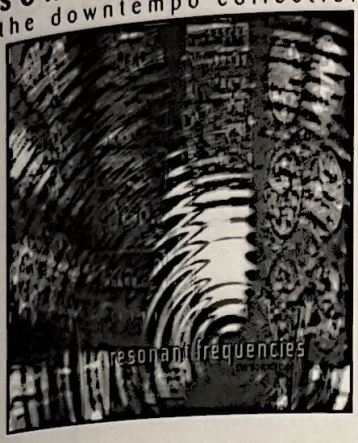

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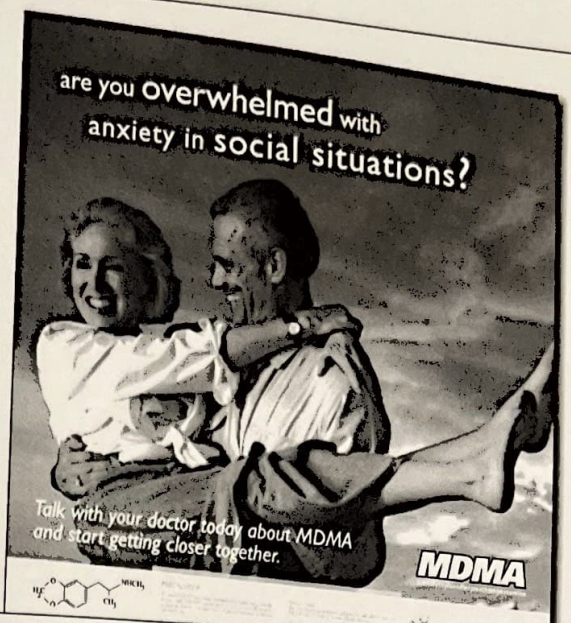

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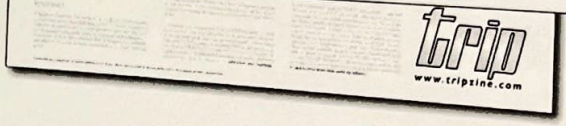

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